

OM and NAAD:
The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness
According to the Upanishads

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English Exposition by:-

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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PREFACE

‘He who is the source of life and power, whose commands all beings, including the Gods, obey, whose shadow is immortality as well as death —we give our oblations and pay our obeisance to that supreme Lord whom we adore’ (Rig Veda, 10/121/2).

In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God (Bible, Gospel of St. John, 1/1-2); and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us (Gospel of St. John 1/14); ‘That was the true light, which lighteth everyman that cometh into the world’ (St. John, 1/9).

‘I am the first and the last; the beginning and the end’ (Bible, Revelation, 22/13).

‘Ishvar is the Atma as seen and/or grasped by the mind. His highest name is OM. So repeat it, meditate on it and think of all its wonderful nature and attributes. Repeating the OM continually is the only true worship. It is not a word, it is God himself’ — Swami Vivekanand (The Complete Works of Sw. Vivekanand, 9 vols, 7/62).

The concept of “OM/Aum” and “Naad” is central to the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads that relate to the origin of this creation and the Supreme Consciousness which is at the core of it, as well as the cosmic, all-pervading nature of it.

This concept is also central to the philosophy of Yoga (meditation) and its related practices such as Dhyan (contemplation) as envisioned and elucidated in the Upanishads which employ OM as a means of realization of the highest state of consciousness and deriving eternal bliss from it.

It is a most esoteric and enigmatic subject that has been researched and debated upon by ancient philosophers, sages and seers ever since the dawn of civilization.

In this book, an attempt is made to analyse this topic from the perspective of the Upanishads, and all such Upanishads that describe the different aspects of this concept of OM/Aum and Naad from various angles have been quoted in full with accompanying notes for explanation.

A careful reading of this book which deals with OM/Aum and Naad in a comprehensive manner will help the reader to come to grasp with this mystical subject. Since this topic is highly complicated and technical, one reading may not be enough; one may need to read parts of it twice or more to come understand its metaphysical and philosophical implications.

All the various connotations and aspects of 'OM' as well as of the 'Naad' are elaborately dealt with and explained in our present book.

While 'OM/Aum' is a monosyllabic word that represents the cosmic Supreme Consciousness that is all-pervading and is at the core of the entire living creation, the 'Naad' is the sound created by the vibration that this Consciousness produces in the vast realm of the cosmos. The 'Naad', the cosmic Sound, is the first and subtlest manifestation of life created by the Supreme Consciousness, represented by the word OM, in all its myriad forms, from the most primitive to the most advanced. The word 'OM' is in a sense a practical means to realize the cosmic Consciousness because it directly represents the latter and is synonymous with it, while 'Naad' is a sound manifestation of OM that represents a proof of the existence of life-giving, life-injecting, and life-infusing forces inherent in cosmic Consciousness, because sound is the first and the basic form of energy that shows the presence of 'life' anywhere. Even in today's modern world, scientists search for sound waves originating in distant cosmos to determine whether or not life existed there.

Our book is a comprehensive exposition on this twin concept of 'OM' and 'Naad' as it is explained in the Upanishads.

I have tried to do my best at de-mystifying this concept, yet I may have erred, being a human being, because this is one topic that had eluded comprehension and explanation by even the greatest of scholars and erudite philosophers.

Anyhow, I am sure the reader would get an overall view of what 'OM/Aum' and 'Naad' are really about.

I offer this book at the holy feet of my beloved Lord God, Sri Ram, with a prayer to excuse me for all the shortcomings there may be in it.

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Chapter 1

OM and NAAD

Cosmic Manifestation of the Super Consciousness

OM/Aum is, in simple layman's term, a name assigned to the cosmic supreme or super Consciousness. This 'Consciousness' is known as Brahm in the Upanishads; it is the only, the only, living entity in the otherwise lifeless and inane creation. It is from this 'Consciousness' known as Brahm that the entire creation has come into being, and it is in this Consciousness that the entire creation will ultimately collapse and merge at the end. Not only this, the very essence of this 'living creation' is Consciousness for the simple reason that without the Consciousness there is no such concept as 'life'.

OM is therefore a name given to this 'cosmic supreme Consciousness' by our ancient sages and seers. Just like we humans have a name with three components—viz. the first name, the middle name and the last name (usually the surname), Brahm or Consciousness name OM also has three components—viz. the sound of the letter 'A' which is its first component, the sound of the letter 'U' is its second or middle component, and finally the sound of the letter 'M' represents its third or last component. These three parts of OM, i.e. A, U and M, are actually 'sounds' like any other name of a human being. Independently they mean nothing, but when pronounced together they refer to a particular entity.

For instance, the name 'Peter' has three sound components—viz. P, Ta and R. Individually these mean nothing, but when spoken together they mean a specific man with a personality and character. When we call out 'Peter' in a crowd, the man with the name 'Peter' would respond immediately. The 'word' Peter has no physical existence except in the form of sound, but the 'entity to which it refers' is a living being, a man known as Peter.

The same thing applies to Brahm and the cosmic Consciousness when we recognize it with OM. OM is a word consisting of sound having three basic components, A, U and M, but the entity to which it refers is 'alive, living, able to create, expand, develop and grow, and then finally come to rest'.

Since the cosmic super Consciousness has no forms or shape in the traditional way we understand the words to mean (like we see ‘Peter’ and know how he looks and behaves)—because this Consciousness has taken the form or shape of all entities that exist, OM would also naturally refer to the fundamental form of life—the ‘super Consciousness’—that is not visible but nevertheless the basic Truth in the entire living world. Remove OM from this world and the world becomes lifeless and without any true identity of its own just like the common man who has no identity known as Peter.

Now, only living entities make a sound; dead entities do not speak. A living man can experience ‘Consciousness’ in his body when he feels any sensations. If we close our ears with fingers in a silent room, we will hear a roaring sound in the background. Besides this, we will also hear our own breath coming in and going out. Anyone can experience this simple fact. But can a dead man hear anything? Do we hear any sound if we hold our ears close to a dead body? This ‘sound’ is produced by the Consciousness that is present in the otherwise gross and inane physical body of a man.

So, while ‘Brahm’ refers to the Consciousness in its cosmic dimension—the macrocosmic form of Consciousness, the same Consciousness when it resides in the individual living being is known as the Atma, the soul—which would mean that the Atma is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Consciousness.

It logically comes to the fore that when we address the Consciousness with the term OM, we are simultaneously addressing its macrocosmic identity known as Brahm as well as its microcosmic identity known as the Atma.

OM is a monosyllable mystical divine word first appearing in the Upanishads and is set forth as an object of profound religious respect, something that is worthy of contemplation and meditation, whereby highest spiritual efficacy is attributed not only to the whole word but also to its three, and on occasions to the four, basic or primal sounds represented by the letters A, U, O and M. It is the source of highest spiritual elevation.

OM also personifies the three Vedas which are the greatest repositories of eclectic knowledge in existence.

OM is usually called Pranav which refers to the cosmic Naad or the ethereal sound in the cosmos that is encapsulated in the word OM. It is a synonymous word for the supreme Brahm which is the cosmic Consciousness. Brahm is the ultimate Truth and Authority from which the entire known creation as well as the unknown one that is beyond comprehension of any man came into being.

The concept of Naad, Bindu and Kalaa are closely associated with OM. Briefly, the ‘Naad’ refers to the concave dish-like sign on the symbol of OM; the ‘Bindu’ is the dot placed just above it at its focal point; and Kalaa is the changing notes of the sound produced by doing Japa with OM. [The final shape that OM and Naad take is: ॐ]

The word OM stands therefore for the entire gamut of creation—right from its beginning, through its development and growth, till its final end.

OM also stands for one who is one's dearest friend and helper, one who is most compassionate and kind, one who shows favour, showers benevolence and gives protection, one who is the support, foundation and prop of the entire creation, and one who gives solace and succour to everyone without any distinction whatsoever.

OM is often used to denote ‘yes, verily, so be it’ —and therefore in this sense it has the same usage as ‘Amen’. In daily use, this word is used as a means of solemn affirmation and respectful assent.

It is used at the beginning and end of any sacred and holy exercise or ritual, such as the reading of the scriptures, chanting of the Mantras or hymns, or saying of prayers. It is invoked as an auspicious salutation to the almighty Authority, the supreme Lord to seek the intercession of the divine powers in creation for the successful completion of any endeavour or enterprise. It is placed at the beginning and at the end of most sacred texts as an exclamatory invocation to invite the blessings of the supreme God. It is used as a mark of greatest respect, to show reverence for the deity, and as an auspicious salutation.

It embodies the triad of creation represented by the Trinity Gods— Brahma for creation, Vishnu for sustenance, and Shiva for conclusion. These three are viewed compositely as one single entity known as Brahm. The three letters of OM— A, U, M — stand for these three Trinity Gods respectively, while the combined sound of OM stands for Brahm, the supreme transcendental consciousness, the Supreme Being which is their one united cosmic form known as the supreme transcendental Being.

According to another theory, OM has four vowel sounds represented by the letters A, O, U, M. When the composite word is pronounced it appears to have only one syllable, i.e. it appears to be a monosyllable word OM, but on analysis it has these four basic Sanskrit vowel sounds. From the perspective of metaphysical analysis, it is said to have six Sanskrit syllables or letters as follows—the first is ‘A’ (अ) which is the 1st letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, the second is ‘Oo’ (उ) which is the 5th letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, the 3rd is ‘Ma’ (म) which is the 38th letter, the 4th letter is the half-syllable, the 5th is the ‘Anuswar’ (dot ं) and the 6th is the crescent shaped ‘Naad’ (ँ) placed on the symbol for the word OM. The final shape of the word OM is— ॐ.

It ought to be noted here that the 2nd and the 3rd syllables (i.e. ‘A’ and ‘U’) almost merge with each other to produce a composite sound which is equivalent to ‘O’ in English and ओ in Sanskrit. This is why “OM” is also written as “Aum”.

The four letters of OM, viz. A, O, U and M represent the four ethereal sounds which the composite Mantra ‘OM’, also known as Pranav, consists of. They are like an algebraic coefficient in mathematics, establishing a link between the various holy and divine facets each of the individual units of the composite Mantra OM as represented by each of these four letters and the cosmic sound that they represent. At the same time, they act as a constant that enhances and multiplies the value and magnitude of the whole composite Mantra. Each of these letters or syllables is assigned the same ethereal, divine and spiritual importance, significance and value as that given to a complete Mantra; they form an integral part of the whole Mantra and the Mantra cannot have any value if even one of its parts is de-linked from it. It is like a complex organic chemical formula where each component is of equal value and importance as its next companion to maintain the integrity of the entire structure.

The four components of this formula are represented by the four letters that constitute OM. The first letter ‘A’ represents the conception of the creation; the second letter ‘O’ represents the development and of the cosmos; the third letter ‘U’ represents the expansion; and the last letter ‘M’, the fourth, represents the conclusion of the creation. The vowel sound of each of these letters represents the uncountable hues, the various

shades, the umpteen numbers of forms of the myriad and varied creation as mentioned here.

As noted above, OM is usually also called 'Pranav'. The word 'Pranav' means 'a roar, a bellow, a reverberating sound, a hum or a droning sound, to utter the word OM'. It also refers to the musical instrument called Tabor, or a small drum, and the sound emanating from it.

It is also used to mean 'Aarambha' (beginning), 'Swikaar' (acceptance, assent), 'Anumati' (consent, permission), 'Aswikaar' (refusal, denial), 'Mangal' (auspiciousness), 'Gyan' (knowledge, enlightenment), 'Brahmi' (awareness of Brahman) etc.

Since any living entity is characterized by making a sound which is the paramount sign of life and consciousness, the sound made by the Consciousness in the cosmos is known as Naad. The word Naad means 'sound'. The very fact that there is a background vibration in the cosmic ether indicates to the existence of some source that produces it—and this source is the cosmic super Consciousness. In more mundane plane, the sound that we hear by closing our ears with fingers in a silent room is the same cosmic Naad reverberating in our inner-self for the simple reason that the 'Consciousness' that produces the Naad in the vast depth of the cosmos also resides in our body. It is this microcosmic form of 'consciousness' living in our own body that produces the sound which we hear upon closing the ears.

The concept of Naad has been exclusively and elaborately dealt with in Naad Bindu Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition. What our ancient sages heard as the 'cosmic sound' was not a figment of their imaginative and hallucinating fantasy-filled mind. Modern science has also established that our planet earth is 'not silent', but is 'humming' with a mysterious tune. Lately two discoveries have been made in this context. In the first, seismologists have detected a subtle and mysterious global humming known as 'love waves'. This new found vibration is made of two-minute to five-minute, side to side surface seismic waves.

A mathematical model of such waves was made in 1911 by British mathematician Augustus Edward Hough Love; hence, these waves are named after him. It is essentially a wave made that torques the earth's north and south hemispheres against each other. It is as if the earth is dancing the 'twist'. This subtle, gentle, almost imperceptible twist is scientifically called the 'Toroidal mode'. Amongst the possible causes are the winds, ocean waves or even the Sun. This comes almost 10 years after seismologists identified louder global oscillations that resemble the ringing of a gigantic bell. This oscillation is known as 'earth's roaring Spheroidal Ring', which is far more powerful oscillation that warps the shape of the planet like waves on a water surface.

And that's not enough. Recent data recordings from the European Space Agency's 'cluster mission', consisting of a group of four high flying satellites, reveals that there is an ear-shattering series of chirps and whistles which the earth emits and which could be heard high above the planet. It has been known since 1970s and is created by the collision of charged particles of the solar wind with the earth's magnetic field. It is related to the phenomena called the 'northern lights'. They are not heard on earth because these radio waves of sound are blocked by the ionosphere surrounding the earth. They are 10,000 times stronger than the strongest of military signals on earth.

The monosyllable OM refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the cosmic Consciousness of creation that is the primary and principal source, and cause, of everything that exists in this creation. When any Mantra is uttered, this principal Lord, Brahm, is first saluted before one pays one's respects to the deity to whom that particular Mantra is dedicated. All the Gods and Goddesses, along with all their manifestations are nothing but the same Brahm playing various roles and displaying his profoundly majestic abilities, his numerous virtues and uncountable characteristics through them. One must first recognise the Principal, pay his respects to him and recognises his superiority before he can hope to please his juniors who are dependent upon this Principal because the latter is also the Lord of these individual Gods and Goddesses. In fact, all the Gods and the Goddesses are primarily the supreme Brahm in these forms who is simply playing out his divine cosmic roles in their forms.

So, Brahm represented by his specific word 'OM' is first saluted before the deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated is showed honours.

For instance, in the Mantra 'OM Namō Narayanaaye', first the supreme Brahm is remembered before one bows to Lord Narayan (Vishnu) who is none but Brahm with this name.

It ought to be remembered that this principle is applicable to all the Mantras in all the Upanishads; it is a universal principle applicable to all the Mantras.

It is said in Yoga Upanishads that a wise ascetic aims to bring about coordination between these two forms of the sound of Naad having its origin in OM which is the cosmic super Consciousness—viz. (i) the cosmic form, and (ii) the individual form. If the ascetic is successful, then he experiences a sense of expansion and freedom from the limitations of the gross physical body. It is very clear how and why this happens. In higher states of mediation, the vibrations inside the body overlap the vibrations generated in the ether outside, and they have a complimentary effect on each other. The individual's vibrations ride piggy-back on the more robust and powerful cosmic vibrations outside, and the result is that the internal being of the ascetic begins to resonate powerfully with the vibrations of Naad in the external ether. The ascetic rises above the ordinary plane of existence wherein his body fails to separate the two forms of vibrations of Consciousness, as the body also begins to vibrate with the same frequency.

To understand how this happens one has to stand near the iron towers or pillars that carry high-tension overhead electric wires; one will experience that the whole tower or pillar is resonating loudly and discernibly with the same frequency with which the overhead wire is vibrating. Not only this, it is very dangerous to come too close to such towers because the area in close proximity is saturated with electric and magnetic fields, and if one is not careful the chances of getting a rude shock is very much possible. This illustrates how the body resonates with the Naad when the frequency of vibrations inside the body and that outside it matches each other. It is then that the ascetic experiences a state known as 'transcendental'—the state of existence that 'transcends' the limitations of the gross body.

The eclectic, the most esoteric and the ethereal word 'Naad' literally means 'a song, a noise, music, a cry'. The creation came into being with five basic elements as its building blocks— sound, wind, fire, water and earth. Of these, sound was the most subtle and sublime, and therefore it was the nearest analogue to the entity that initiated the process of creation in the first place. It was given the name 'Pranav' which was deemed

to be synonymous with 'Brahm', and it represented the cosmic conscious factor or energy field which was also known as the Soul of the cosmos. Hence, the first revelation of the cosmic consciousness was 'sound', and this sound was called 'Naad'. It had the energy of sound incorporated in its vibrations.

The Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5 says that the Naad (which is the cosmic sound that is generated in ether by the vibrations caused by the cosmic Consciousness known as 'Pranav') helps to establish a union between the ascetic and the supreme Brahm during Yoga.

This is because the cosmic sound that is heard by the ascetic in the higher stages of meditation when his repetition of OM reaches a crescendo and culminates in his nerves and veins resonating with this sound, he experiences extreme thrill and ecstasy. All impulses originating from the external world cease to be registered by his brain (mind and sub-conscious) so much so that he would remain in a state of suspended animation vis-à-vis this material world of sense objects. This translates into his being in a transcendental state of existence that is obtained during the Turiya state. Hence, OM leads one to the Turiya state of transcendental existence when there is no difference between the Hans represented by the Atma or the individual 'self' of the ascetic, and the Hans represented by the supreme Brahm. They become one and the same.

When the ascetic meditates using the OM Mantra, the vibrations generated inside his body by constant repetition of OM coincide with the vibration generated in the ether by the cosmic Consciousness outside his body. When the two vibrations overlap with each other or coalesce with each other, the ascetic is able to experience oneness between the two types of vibrations—which means he begins to experience oneness between his own Atma and Brahm known as the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma.

The supreme transcendental Being known as 'Brahm' is known as Pranav because it is the cosmic Consciousness that uniformly permeates in each corner of creation, and this Consciousness generates the cosmic sound known as Naad in the cosmic ether because of its vibrations indicating life and activity. The cosmic sound thus generated is conceptualized in the form of the word Mantra OM. OM is therefore a word symbol for Brahm; it is a 'Mantra' because it unravels the secrets of Brahm and paves the way for direct access to the latter. In other words, Brahm has its manifested form as OM.

The 'Pranav' is the cosmic Consciousness that generates vibrations in ether, which in turn creates the cosmic sound known as 'Naad'. Pranav and 'Brahm' are synonymous with one another because the term Brahm is universally regarded as being applied to the cosmic Consciousness. Pranav is a term that is regarded as a synonym for the supreme transcendental Consciousness that exists in creation in the form of ethereal vibrations that give vibrancy, vigour, energy and dynamism to existence. Pranav on the one hand is regarded as a most subtle revelation of Brahm in the form of the cosmic Consciousness. The latter generates vibrations which in turn produce the cosmic sound known as Naad. The sound of Naad is conceptualized in the form of the word Mantra OM. 'OM' is the word equivalent of Pranav; it is the name given to the Supreme Being known as Brahm like any name consisting of letters that is given to any particular person in order to distinguish him from all others.

Hence, Pranav, Brahm, Naad and OM are synonymous with each other.

A closely related term is the 'Anahat Naad' which refers to the apparently self-created cosmic sound called 'Naad'. [Pronunciation: The word "Anahat" is pronounced as "A-naa-hut"]

It is called 'Anahat' because it was generated on its own without any apparent cause such as striking of two entities with one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world. It resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track. The Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail.

From the point of view of genesis according to the Tantra Shastra which believes that everything in existence originated from Shiva and Shakti (the cosmic male and female elements), a very interesting depiction is given as to how the cosmic Naad came into being and how the rest of creation was revealed from it. Its basic scene is as follows— According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendorous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Out of the five basic elements, the sound is the only one which first appeared and was a manifestation of life. The rest subsequently appeared and became gross by increasing order of grossness. Since sound travels in waves, it produced a rhythmic, wave-like movement in ether and it was called the 'wind' which helped to propagate the sound. The waves of sound either collided with each other or rode one on the top of the other to produce a wide spectrum of sound, some of high and some of low frequencies.

Hence, 'Naad' is perceived in various ways depending upon the caliber of the sensory receptor organs and the mental development of the seeker. 'Naad' covered all frequencies of sound—ultra high, very high, low and very low etc. As a result, some sound was audible and some not just like we can hear someone speaking but cannot hear the electromagnetic radio waves which surround us everywhere.

This 'Naad' can be physically perceived in various modes— (i) as the resonating sound of a gong hit by a hammer, (ii) as a distant roar of the ocean, (iii) the rustling sound of a rattlesnake, (iv) as the trundling sound of a train, and (v) as the playing of various musical instruments, either separately or in conjunction with each other. In some cases it is simply a consistent and persistent roar of an ocean, in others that sound is a resonance like that of a tinkling anklet or different musical notes of various notes and tunes.

OM and NAAD:

The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 2

Relationship of OM and Naad with the Spoken Word, the 'Vaak'.

The great Kashmiri philosopher named Abhinavgupta has given a meticulous account of the relationship of the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language with the creation of the cosmos in his work 'Tantrasaara' and 'Paratrishika Vivarana'.

Now, let us briefly and in a common-man's language see the fundamental principles that govern the origin of the spoken word known as 'Vaak', and its relationship with OM and Naad.

In the bowels of the infinite sky (Akash) is the 'Bindu', the 'dot' which represents the center of the cosmic bowl or the focal point of the cosmic mirror from where generates the first signs of cosmic vibrations, called the 'Naad'.

The cosmic gel was not stagnant, and its being in a state of flux meant that there was an inherent movement in it. Movement, big or small, generates energy, and this is transformed into sound energy. The energy of the sound evolved in stages—first a simple ripple, followed by successive ripples overlapping and coalescing with each other to produce larger and stronger ripples of vibration.

The cosmic gel was contained in the bowl of the sky, and the center of this bowl containing the cosmic gel was where the first ripple appeared. This was the 'Bindu', the dot, the focal point of the cosmic bowl or mirror. Just like light produced at the focal point bounces off the surface of the mirror to be reflected in all the directions, this sound bounced off from its point of origin in the center of the gel and then bounced off against the surface of the sky to ultimately spread in all the directions in different amplitudes.

Ancient sages meditated into the origin of 'Vaak' or the phenomena of speech. They discovered that 'speech' in its original and primary form is 'Paraa' or beyond reach and comprehension, the 'unperceived' form of sound that corresponds to the 'Absolute'. This primary form of sound rests in the 'Mool', or the root, which forms the basis of the rest of the sounds and its offshoot, the creation. It is also called 'Moola-dhaar' because it is the fundamental basis of the rest of things. This is the 'Brahm', the 'Absolute'.

The second stage is known as 'Madhya-maa', meaning the middle one. This stage is still unperceived and nebulous.

The third stage is known as the 'Pashyanti', which means the stage after the first phase of being unperceived, i.e. the stage that is perceived. This stage is the 'thought' or 'Vichaar'. The primary Absolute has now manifested and crystallized itself in the form of the 'thought'.

And finally, this thought is expressed in the form of vocal or audible speech known as 'Vaak' or the spoken words. This stage is known as 'Vaikhari'—expressed thoughts.

These three components of Vaak correspond to the three basic components of OM, viz. A, U and M. In other words, the sound of 'A' corresponds to the 'Paraa', that of 'U' to 'Madhyama', and of 'M' to 'Vaikhari'.

The *Naad Bindu Upanishad* describes the hearing of a distant roar by closing the ears with fingers, and it goes on to say that an ascetic seeker (Yogi) can, with practice, fine-tune his sensory perceptions to filter this vague sound and decipher the different wavelengths or frequencies of that somber and composite sound to hear the 'divine music being played with umpteen number of musical instruments playing simultaneously in harmony with each other'.

To understand the importance of 'Naad', let us look at our own-selves. A man is said to be alive as long as he 'breathes' i.e. the vital wind called Pran passes through his body, specially the nostrils. This Pran not only keeps the body 'alive', its manifestation is done by two distinct signs— the beating of the heart and, most important, the passage of wind through the throat/the wind pipe. And this passage produces 'speech' by vibrating against the vocal cords which act like musical instruments. So, metaphorically the Pran 'speaks', the Pran 'vibrates and pulsates' with life in the form of heart beat. The 'sign of life' or vitality in the Pran or the vital wind is the ability and power to produce 'sound', and therefore, at the micro-level of the individual, the faculty of speech is a metaphor of the 'cosmic Naad' which is the faculty of speech of the supreme, transcendental 'Pran' at the macro-level.

The sound waves need a medium to travel. The 'Naad' that pervades the cosmos too needs a medium to travel—and this medium is called 'ether'. It is expressed as 'a gigantic ocean of sound waves'. This 'Naad' or cosmic sound produce vibrations in this ether and therefore it was the first source of 'vibratory energy'. The vibrations themselves produce the 2nd element called the 'wind' while the energy lying latent in these vibrations produces the 'light', the grosser form of which was the third element 'fire'.

As noted above, the vocal cords of our body are like a musical instrument—they play the 'Naad' represented by the Pran or the vital wind passing through these cords and producing what we call 'speech'. The various modes of these vibrations produce 'voice' in its various modes and with its different pitches, tones and tenors.

The 'Naad', therefore, is the connecting link between Brahm and the Pran of the creature. All the myriad powers of creation have their origin in and work through this 'Naad'. The 'Naad' is called 'a flaming sound' in Buddhism, 'a Kalma' in Islam, 'the word' according to Bible (Gospel, St. John, 1/1), 'as Udgat' which mean 'the song of the beyond' by the Upanishad (e.g. Chandogya Upanishad). Brihadarankya Upanishad, 1/2/4 asserts that cosmic creation began with sound.

We can reach the formless from the formed, riding piggy back on the waves of the sound emanating from the vital wind force of the body called 'Pran', and reach the

cosmic form of the 'Pran' which is called the 'Naad', the manifestation of the vibrations of life.

This 'Naad' is the door-step to Brahm (i.e. 'Brahm-realisation') because it is the 1st and the subtlest element which was produced at the time of creation. But unfortunately, this wonderful and fascinating sound cannot normally be heard by us because we are so overwhelmed by the din of worldly sounds surrounding us from all sides. We remain so engrossed and submerged in the physical world that we don't hear the 'Naad' which is in the realm of the subtle. Once we train ourselves to hear it, we plunge ourselves in the void of inner space present within ourselves. That is why the Hindi word for nerves is 'Naadi'—the duct through which the divine cosmic 'Naad' flows inside the body. When the divine and sublime cosmic sound waves are integrated with the nerves present in the body, the natural electromagnetic pull of the cosmos exerts an upward thrust on our vital wind forces trapped inside these nerves and the body, and as a consequence they tend to rise up. This is precisely what is achieved by the practice of various Yoga postures and what is meant by activating the 'Chakras' or the subtle energy centers in the body. Their trapped energy is unleashed and harnessed by the body for upliftment of the he Atma or the soul of the creature towards its primary source which is the 'Naad' or the Brahm respectively.

The cosmic 'Naad' is also called 'Anaahat' or a 'soundless sound' because it is a sound produced without any aggressive cause. That is, it has a frequency which our ordinary ears can't hear even as we don't hear the broadcast of a radio station or a mobile chatter on a mobile phone unless we have the properly tuned radio or a compatible mobile instrument to capture and decipher those frequencies of the sound wave which are present all around us but cannot be heard without these instruments.

The cosmic 'Naad' is like music played by Brahm. This music is an extension of the supreme consciousness and it is a manifestation of that divine conscious factor. Since sound is the subtlest of the five basic elements of creation and is the nearest to divinity, the cosmic music consisting of the 'Naad' is the nearest analogue to Brahm. By being able to hear that 'Naad' in one's own ears and by being able to realise that the 'Naad' is originating as a subtle vibration from his own heart and getting enhanced by the compatible electromagnetic waves generated by his own brain, the Yogi is able to establish a direct link with himself and the supreme Brahm. By a natural corollary, he is able to establish oneness of his own consciousness with the cosmic consciousness because the science of music, or the science which is recognised and defined as music, transcends limitations imposed by the gross body, the physical world and its language. This 'Naad' or the divine music played by the cosmic consciousness is therefore an expression of the Reality that exists beyond doubt but is so subtle and sublime that it requires a finely tuned mind with proper training and acumen to catch its frequencies and give meaning to it.

The various fine tunes and notes of varying hues that are heard by the Yogi (ascetic) during meditation only go to prove that he is no more a layman or an ordinary student of spiritualism, but an erudite, discerning and learned student of advanced metaphysics. He has acquired that mystical power, acumen and knowledge which an expert musician possesses that enables him to discern and distinguish between the different forms of musical sounds emanating from various musical instruments.

It signifies the harmony between the vibrations emanating from the heart as well as the electromagnetic waves from the brain of the creature (the Yogi) with those emanating from the cosmic world, or the cosmic waves pervading the entire cosmos in the form of the word OM. We all know that sound consists of waves. Just like one catches one particular radio station with proper and correct frequency on his radio, so do the seeker or aspirant reaches his next destination riding piggy back on these vibration and waves emanating from his heart and brain respectively, and subsequently he lands at a spot, or takes birth in the form which matches these vibrations or waves very much like the voice of the speaker at the microphone at the broadcasting centre of the radio station reaches his audience riding upon the sound and electromagnetic waves emanating from the transmitter and being received by the radio receiver.

This explains how and why certain Yogis have that transcendental mystical power to leave their bodies and wonder around in the microscopic spirit form wherever they wish to go and then come back to rejoin their bodies. This also explains how and why a devotee of a particular deity (God) reaches the chosen deity's abode at the time of death to the exclusion of the abode of all other deities. It also explains the phenomenon of rebirth.

The Naad is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produces sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by ancient sages and seers who devised the word OM to capture its fundamental tones and notes in the constituent letters or syllables of this OM. Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy of sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplies itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements separated from one another, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however remained trapped in the bowls of the earth as the world gradually crystallized into its present shape.

The Naad was envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the cosmic sound having its genesis in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produced the background sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by them during their meditative sessions which lasted for extended periods of time. Now once having heard it, they devised a word to encapsulate its fundamental notes and tones, and they came up with the word OM to capture the essential mode in which this cosmic Naad was heard by them. When they revealed this secret to their disciples, it was through the word OM, and they went on to analyse this sound and deciphered its components as the basic letters that constitute it, i.e. A, O, U and M. Refer to *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 6.

Naad is the cosmic sound that is envisioned in the form of the monosyllabic Mantra known as OM. This word OM which is an ethereal sound is used to contemplate upon Brahm during meditation, continuously, consistently and persistently, till the time its repetition results in submerging the practitioner in a continuous and overwhelming stream of sound waves of increasing frequency and pitch that is generated by the reverberating vibrations caused by continuous repetition of OM. This is when he is said to hear Naad, the cosmic background sound in the ether which is believed to be generated by the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.

The primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity. The energy generated by the sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplied itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements present earlier in the homogenous cosmic gel separated from one another to give it a heterogeneous character, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. While this process was progressing, the elements captured or soaked energy according to their capacity much like sponge soaks water or earth attracts anything by its gravitational pull.

This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their respective places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however required a medium to hide itself in because the water and air were inimical to its existence; the water would douse it and the wind would blow it out of existence. Therefore it hid inside the bowels of the earth and entered subtly into things originating from earth. That is why it is present even under the vast reservoir of water known as the ocean, and at the same time lives subtly inside everything that grows on earth, such as food. The creator is so wise that he hid this tremendous source of life, energy and vitality in the earth because he knew that if life is to be made sustainable it would need a viable source of self-sustenance in the form of an inexhaustible source of energy. Finally, the grossest element known as the earth also solidified into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of primordial activity in the cosmos, it naturally follows that the Atma, the ‘soul or life’ of all that exists in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved and derived its energy, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad. This cosmic Naad is still hearable when one closes one’s ears when one hears the roaring sound of the blood flowing through the veins and arteries inside the body.

The *Hanso-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 16-17 describes the sound emanating from this Naad, while verse no. 18-20 describes its effect on the body. Let us now see what they say—

“Verse no. 16-17. When a sincere aspirant has repeated the Mantra (So-a-ham, i.e. ‘that is me’ as described in verse no. 4) ten Koti times (i.e. 100 million times), he is able to witness (i.e. hear the reverberation of) the cosmic Naad. This cosmic resonating vibration

has ten sound forms, or cosmic varieties of sound or music emanating from it— (i) clinking of bracelets, (ii) tinkling of anklets, (iii) the deep reverberation and resonating clanging sound of a gong hitting a brass bell, (iv) the sharp blowing of a conch shell, (v) the playing of stringed musical instrument (e.g., lute, harp, guitar), (vi) the clap or clonking sound of crashing cymbals, (vii) the shrill but soothing and haunting sound of a flute, (viii) the beating of tumbrels, (ix) the sound of kettle drums, and (x) the rumbling and thundering of cloud.

The spiritual seeker would hear these sounds in a progressive manner as his meditation moves ahead towards reaching its pinnacle of spiritual accomplishment. The sounds or music are first heard in a mixed cacophony, and then they begin to separate into distinct genres of sound clearly discernible by the aspirant (16).

He should endeavour to forgo the first nine forms of Naad and instead concentrate his attention on the last form, i.e. the thundering and rumbling of clouds (17).

[Note—(1) The various subtle sounds emanating from the cosmic vibration called the Naad have been elaborately described in Naad-Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition; it has been included in the volume dealing with such Upanishads in this series.]

“Verse no. 18-20. As a result of the vibrations created by this Naad having ten subtle forms as described above, the body experiences different types of emotional feelings, each feeling being specific to that particular form of Naad. These feelings reveal themselves in the form of various reflexes of the body¹.

The 1st sound creates a tickling sensation. The 2nd sound creates tense or taut muscles leading to spasms. The 3rd sound leads to perspiration breaking out from the body. The 4th sound creates tremors in the head. The 5th sound creates saliva to dribble out of the mouth. The 6th sound causes ‘a rain of Amrit’ (which is a metaphor for tears of bliss). The 7th sound bestows upon the aspirant the blessing of being acquainted with the profoundest and most secret of knowledge. The 8th sound enables the aspirant to speak in a mystical language. [That is, he can speak in any tongue, he can speak of things unknown, he can speak of the wisest of things, his speech acquires the potent and prowess of possessing divine powers]. The 9th sound enables the aspirant to make himself invisible and he acquires the so-called ‘3rd eye’ having mystical and divine powers of insight and infinite vision. Finally, when the aspirant hears the 10th sound, he acquires the transcendental and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahm, and as a result he experiences or witnesses the esoteric sublime Brahm first hand (18-20).

[Note—¹The reflex actions of the muscles in the body are controlled by the brain. When the nerves of the brain—which is actually an electronic circuit consisting of a fine maze of ganglions, nerve fibers and nerve endings much like an integrated circuit of a computer—are impacted by these sound waves emanating from the cosmic ‘Naad’ which tend to interfere with and modify their working much like the interference of the electronically charged particles of the solar wind with the radio transmission on earth, the impulses or electric signals which are given by the brain to other parts of the body also get effected or modified. This results in the muscles of the body reacting differently to different wavelengths or frequencies of the various sound waves emanating from the sea of sound called the ‘Naad’. Each individual reaction of the body will therefore correspond to particular frequencies or wavelength that the aspirant is hearing at that instant. As a natural corollary, it follows that by observing the reflexes of the aspirant’s body, we can determine at what spiritual level he is prevailing at that moment.]”

The various subtle sounds emanating from the cosmic 'Naad', which essentially consist of vibrations in the ether, have been elaborately described in 'Naad Bindu Upanishad' of the Rig Veda. In the beginning, the aspirant simply hears a roar of some distant ocean, but this rises to an all-engulfing crescendo which literally drowns the conscious part of his brain. By and by, he starts differentiating between the various hues and shades of sound which acquire resemblance to the sound of various musical instruments playing together, and later on playing separately like in a stereophonic orchestra. The highly evolved mind-intellect of an enlightened ascetic is able to distinctly hear these individual strands of sounds in the form of the cosmic music emanating from Brahm.

As a result of this 'Naad', the body witnesses many apparent reflexes. The reflex actions of the muscles in the body are involuntarily controlled by the brain. When the nerves of the brain—which is actually an electronic circuit consisting of a fine maze of ganglions, nerve fibers and nerve ending much like an integrated circuit of a computer — are impacted by these sound waves emanating from the cosmic 'Naad' which tend to interfere with and modify their working much like the interference of the electronically charged particles of the solar wind with the radio transmission on earth, the impulses or electric signals which are given by the brain to other parts of the body also get effected or modified. This results in the muscles of the body reacting differently to different wavelengths or frequencies of the various sound waves emanating from the sea of sound called the 'Naad'. Each individual reaction of the body will therefore correspond to particular frequencies or wavelength that the aspirant is hearing at that instant. As a natural corollary, it follows that by observing the reflexes of the aspirant's body, we can determine at what spiritual level he is prevailing at that moment.

The 1st sound (according to verse no. 17 of Hanso-panishad) is a tickling sensation. The 2nd sound creates tense or taut muscles leading to spasms. The 3rd sound leads to perspiration breaking out from the body. The 4th sound creates tremors in the head (verse no. 18). The 5th sound creates saliva to dribble out of the mouth. The 6th sound causes 'a rain of Amrit' (which is a metaphor for tears of bliss). The 7th sound bestows upon the aspirant the blessing of being acquainted with the profoundest and most secret of knowledge. The 8th sound enables the aspirant to speak in mystical language. [That is, he can speak in any tongue, he can speak of things unknown, he can speak of the wisest of things, his speech has the potent and prowess of divine powers] (verse no. 99). The 9th sound enables the aspirant to make himself invisible and he acquires the so-called '3rd eye' having mystical and divine powers of insight and infinite vision. Finally, when the aspirant hears the 10th sound, he acquires the transcendental and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahm, and as a result, he experiences or witnesses Brahm first hand (verse no. 20).

How this Naad is heard by the ascetic is described in *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 2 in the following words—
"Verse no. 2 = [This verse briefly describes how 'Naad', the cosmic sound which pervades throughout the universe, can be heard by the mediating ascetic or Yogi.]

The aspirant Yogi should merge the two vital winds—the Pran and Apaana—and hold them together in his stomach or abdomen. This is called 'Kumbhak', or 'holding of the breath' aspect of wind control exercise in Yoga¹.

Then the sight should be firmly fixed and focused at the tip of the nose. The fingers of both the hands should be used (to close the opening of the nose, ears and mouth which enables the aspirant Yogi) to achieve success in going through the process of ‘Shanmukhi Mudra’².

With successful practice of this posture, the aspirant is enabled to hear the ethereal cosmic sound called Pranav (or OM). This sound completely absorbs the attention of the Yogi³ (2).

[Note—¹The Pran is the most important vital wind in the body amongst the various winds that sustain life in the creature’s body. It is synonymous with breath which is inhaled and then exhaled through the nostrils. This Pran is synonymous with life also because without it, life simply cannot exist. The Apaana wind is the wind which passes down the intestines, and extends right from the cavity of the mouth to the opening of the anus; it helps in ingestion of food, its digestion in the alimentary canal, and its excretion. Both the winds are equally important, for without Pran a person wouldn’t be able to breathe and would suffocate to death, while without Apaana he wouldn’t be able to digest food and excrete waste matters from the body. The Apaana wind becomes hot due to its passage in the body, especially the intestines, and it acts like heated air in a chimney that goes up.

According to the principles of Yoga, the exercise that helps to control the vital winds is called Pranayam. Essentially, it consists of three phases—viz. the inhalation of breath called ‘Purak’ (literally meaning filling) when breath is drawn in, the holding of it inside the body called ‘Kumbhak’ (literally meaning to fill a pitcher), and its slowly exhalation through the nostrils called ‘Rechak’ (literally meaning cleansing or purging).

So, when the fresh oxygen laden breath is held inside the body during the Kumbhak phase of Yoga, the tissues of the body get proper time to absorb the oxygen brought in by the Pran when it was inhaled. Meanwhile, the impure toxic gases created during the process of digestion of food inside the body are collected by the heated Apaana wind. They are brought to the upper part of the body, and they get mixed with the Pran wind while it is being held inside the abdomen/stomach during the Kumbhak phase. Basically, this phase is like holding air in a balloon before it is vented out through the nostrils during the Rechak phase. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-117 which is Chapter no. 9 of this volume.

²The Shanmukhi Mudra is done to control and harness the mind, to regulate the two vital winds etc. It helps to provide bliss by diverting the vital winds from either going out through the nostrils (Pran) or through the anus (Apaana). Instead, these winds are trained to move up into the top of the head to enter the area called ‘Brahm Randhra’ which is a hair like slit in the skull. A separate appendix shows the location of this Brahm Randhra with the aid of a sketch. To practice this Mudra or posture of Yoga/meditation, the aspirant should sit in a Swastik posture, pull up the Apaana wind (i.e. prevent it from escaping as flatus from the anus), slowly repeat the divine syllables of Pranav or OM, close the ears with the thumb, the eyes with the first fingers (the index finger), and the nose with the other fingers. The breath should also be simultaneously held as done during Kumbhak. This meditative posture should be continued as long as the aspirant feels the sensation of bliss. The mixed winds (i.e. the Pran and Apaana) which have been trapped inside the body get heated while being held in Kumbhak phase. Being lighter than the earlier cool wind, the mixed wind now rises up into the head to enter the area on its top, called the Brahm Randhra. When this is achieved, the aspirant Yogi experiences weird sounds in his head, which are nothing but the cosmic Naad.

³That is, once this sound is heard, its vibrations have such an effect on the nerves of the brain, especially the mind, that the aspirant literally drowns in the ocean of cosmic

sound waves emanating from the cosmic Naad called Pranav or OM so much so that he loses awareness of everything else, both his own self as well as the external world around him. He lives in a state of perpetual bliss and appears to be engulfed by waves of surging exhilaration just like a man who listens to enchanting music with ear-plugs is oblivious of the surrounding world. This ocean of sound drowns him. The pulsating waves of sound emanating from the Naad act like vibrators which caress and massage the nerves of the brain, resulting in their becoming calm, relaxed and quiet. Naad therefore also has a tranquilizing effect on the Yogi. This state of stupefaction and numbness of the senses, the sedative and intoxicating effect that is brought about on hearing this Naad is extremely subtle, sublime and divine in nature rather than the gross forms of numbness of the senses brought about by worldly sounds like listening to loud rock music, but this example would help one to grasp how the Yogi must feel when he hears that Naad.]”

The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 3 asserts that when the ascetic or the spiritual aspirant hears the Naad resonating in his inner being it is then that he is deemed to be self-realised. It is because without this he would not be able to hear the cosmic sound called Naad. It is only when one the frequency of his inner-self is in tune with the frequency of the cosmic Consciousness that he can really witness the presence of the latter in his inner being as the Atma. To quote—
 ” When the inner-self resonates with the cosmic sound called Naad (as happens when the ethereal Mantra Pranav or OM is constantly and persistently repeated during the process of Yoga or meditation) so much so that it appears to the practitioner that this Naad is springing forth from his inner-self (like ripples or waves generated in the water of a lake), the Hans (i.e. the Atma) that is experienced and witnessed then implies that the spiritual aspirant has indeed become self-realised and has attained spiritual enlightenment.

[That is, when the aspirant is drowned in the vibrations created by doing Japa with the Pranav Mantra dedicated to Brahm, i.e. the Mantra OM, a time comes when he is able to experience the presence of the Consciousness inside his inner-self. It appears to the practitioner that these vibrations created by doing Japa or repetition of OM originate from a central point in his heart, and then spread out from it to cover each point of his being just like ripples appearing in the water of a lake having their origin at one point but spreading out to its furthest corner. It is then said that he has become self-realised because he has witnessed the presence of the Atma symbolized by the Hans inside his own bosom.

It is easy to visualize this phenomenon. Suppose there is a lake whose surface is absolutely calm and placid. Now suppose there is swan floating on this surface. The bird would breathe, and this process creates a small expansion and contraction of the muscles of the body which each inhalation and exhalation. This in turn produces subtle rhythmic pulsations of the body of the swan which passes on to the water, thereby creating subtle waves on the surface of the otherwise absolutely calm water. When one observes these waves he finds that they have their point of origin at the spot where the swan floats.

In the context of metaphysics, the ‘consciousness’ residing in the inner self of the creature as his Atma has its abode in the space of the subtle aspect of the heart. It is from here that vibrations of life are generated, and when they begin to resonate in the inner being of the creature they resemble the cosmic Naad because the creature is an image of the cosmos in a miniature form.

The heart is made to beat by the spark of life known as ‘consciousness’ present in it. The subtle vibrations created by this beating are reinforced by the vibrations created by doing Japa with OM. The energy waves generated by the beating of the heart and the rhythmic chanting of OM reinforce each other, and the two coalesce with each other to gather momentum and energy that leads to a resonating sound that makes it possible for the man engrossed in meditation to hear a reverberating sound that resembles the sound of the cosmic Naad (sound) inside his being. What is primarily a subtle form of sound becomes an overwhelming resonance that virtually drowns the hearer in its reverberating crescendo.]

When one becomes enlightened internally, it is possible to know about the truth of all things externally.

[When one is inherently intelligent and wise, it is easy for him to learn anything in this world, as opposed to a man who is basically stupid, dull, block-head and ill-witted. No matter what great efforts are made to teach him anything, he would just not understand. The same teacher teaches a class of so many students, but out of them some reach the pinnacle of glory and achievement in life while others become complete failures. How can one blame the teacher, for if his teaching was faulty then how is it that some of his students do so excellently well in life in the field of knowledge taught by the teacher?] (3).”

The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 4 asserts that Naad, Bindu and Kalaa represent the three eyes of Shiva. To quote—”The three symbolic eyes of Shiva are represented by Naad, Bindu and Kalaa. It is with this eye that Shiva sees this world.

[That is, an enlightened ascetic sees this world through the eyes of wisdom instead of the physical eyes of the gross body. The physical eyes see only gross things and their external features. These eyes are unable to penetrate deep and see the truth hidden behind the external façade. On the other hand, the third eye is the eye of wisdom which helps the ascetic to see this ‘truth’ just like modern X-rays help us to see behind the skin.

The Naad, Bindu and Kalaa are components of OM. Briefly, the ‘Naad’ refers to the concave dish-like sign on the symbol of OM; the ‘Bindu’ is the dot placed just above it at its focal point; and Kalaa is the changing notes of the sound produced by doing Japa with OM. These concepts have been elaborately described in a separate appendix dealing with OM at the end of this volume.

The light emanating from the third eye of Shiva seems to pulsate like the light of the glow-worm or the waxing and waning phases of the moon. Even as the phases of the moon are called its ‘Kalaas’, the pulsations of light emanating from the third eye are also called ‘Shiva’s Kalaas’. It is the same Shiva who uses the third eye to scorch the creation to ashes when he is angry, and to acquire wisdom and enlightenment when he is meditating and contemplating upon the ‘self’ and the ‘truth’.] (4).”

The concept of ‘Anaahat Naad’ has been described in *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its verse no. 3 as follows—”This apparently self-created cosmic sound is called ‘Anaahat’ (so called because it was generated on its own without any cause such as two entities striking one another which is the usual cause of generation

of sound in this world; it resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track).

There is an entity which transcends this plane and exists beyond it, and it is on its inspiration that this Anaahat sound is generated in the ether of the cosmos. ‘That’ supreme, self-existent, non-describable and transcendental Authority is known as Brahm. When the ascetic (i.e. the practitioner of meditation and contemplation) is able to have access to this Brahm, the ultimate frontier of spiritual endeavours so to say, nothing remains to be known, nothing remains to be accessed (3).”

The different genres of sound emanating from the cosmic Naad resemble different notes and modes of music coming out from musical instruments. These have been enumerated in the following Upanishads—Hanso-panishad, verse no. 16 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 33-36 of Rig Veda tradition; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 80 of Sam Veda tradition.

Yoga Upanishads assert that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad when his Kundalini is activated and the vital winds forces of life present inside the body are controlled. At the same time as experiencing the dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, called the Bindu, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. The way Naad is experienced by the ascetic has been narrated in Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33-36, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/2, and Hanso-panishad, verse no. 16.

The word Bindu literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the ‘Naad Bindu’ Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Dhyan Bindu, Amrit Bindu, Amrit Naad and Yogshikha Upanishads etc.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 52 mentions how this Naad is heard and the dripping of Bindu experienced by the practitioner of Yoga when his Kundalini is activated. To quote—“It is from here or due to the activation of the Kundalini’s subtle energy that the Bindu¹ develops and the cosmic Naad² is enhanced.

The practitioner also hears the subtle sound of breath coming in and going out of the nostrils, the sound that resembles the nasal sounds made by silently hissing the two letters ‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’ of the Sanskrit alphabet. The combined effect of continuously hearing these two sounds in a cyclic manner as the practitioner exhales and inhales breath is the formation of the word ‘Hans’ which means ‘a divine Swan’. [In other words, by continuously practicing Yoga, a stage is reached when the spiritual aspirant realises that he has obtained an exalted stature and has been successful in his endeavour of doing Yoga. This achievement is indicated by the fact that his sub-conscious mind hums and constantly reminds him that he is as pure and holy as the Swan—the ‘Hans’].³

From this arises the Mana (i.e. the desire and inclination of the mind to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy that comes with experiencing the pure conscious ‘self’ or Atma, in all its glory and magnificence, during meditation) (52).

[Note—¹The word Bindu literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the ‘Naad Bindu’ Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Dhyana Bindu, Amrit Bindu and Amrit Naad Upanishads etc.

²At the same time as experiencing this dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. Refer Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33-36, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/2, and Hansopanishad, verse no. 16.

³Traditionally, Swan is regarded as a holy and pure bird. It is said to pick up pearls from amongst an array of gems and jewels, and drink milk while leaving aside water and other additives that have been added to adulterate the milk. Its high position in the hierarchy of evolution, especially that aspect which relates to wisdom, erudition and

skills, is proved by the fact that it is the mount of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, erudition, skills and knowledge. So, when a practitioner of Yoga has reached the stage when he begins to hear Naad and his breath humming silently the word 'Hans' as it comes in and goes out of the body during normal course of routing breathing as well as during the actual time when Yoga is being done, i.e. during the Rechak and Purak phases of Pranayam respectively, he would understand that he is successful in his endeavour.]”

There are a number of Upanishads which describe the concept of Naad in detail. Some of them are the following—Naad Bindu of Rig Veda, Yogchudamani of Sam Veda, Hansopanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahm Vidya and Ekakchar of Krishna Yajur Veda; the Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2,5, and Canto 4, verse no. 3 amongst others.

The concept of Naad and Bindu has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 48-49, 71-73.

The relationship between Naad and Bindu has been elucidated in great detail in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 3, verse nos. 3, 11, and Canto 4, verse no. 47.

The relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

‘Naad Shakti’ or the majestic, dynamic and profound mystical and spiritual energy, powers and potentials of Naad have been expounded in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48, 72.

The ‘Bindu Shakti’ or the majestic mystical energy and spiritual potentials of the point-source from where the cosmic Naad is envisioned to have had its origin has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 49, 71, 73.

Now let us quote these verses of the *Yogshikha Upanishad* and see how beautifully these concepts have been elucidated by it:--

“Canto 1, verse no. 105 = When this is effectively done, the Pran (the wind that is located in the upper part of the body; the breath), the Apaana (the wind in the intestines that has been blocked from passing out by blocking the escape route through the anus), the Naad (the cosmic sound that is heard when one concentrates and does meditation) and its accompanying Bindu (the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard)—all these four are made to unite due to Mool Bandh. This exercise of Mool Bandh helps this to become a reality; the practitioner becomes an expert in uniting them by doing the Mool Bandh successfully. There is no doubt about it (105).

[Note—Refer verse no. 157 of this Canto 1 of this Upanishad, as well as Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 46.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 167 = This body has four Peeths¹ or symbolic altars where the ascetic offers his symbolically prayers to the Supreme Being enshrined in his own self. [In other

words, the body is treated like a pilgrim site where the Shakti principle of Divinity is worshipped according to Tantra philosophy. The word 'Peeth' is indicative of this—because the word refers to the pilgrim sites where the Divinity is worshipped in its female manifestation as a Shakti or Goddess instead of the male form as a God. When any fire sacrifice is done, a seat is designated for the deity to be worshipped, and it is also called a Peeth.]

The four Vedas² are like the lighted lamps that show illumination to it. [That is, the four Vedas illuminate the wise person's mind and show him the auspicious, correct and noble path through the dense dark forest of delusions and worldly pitfalls through which he has to traverse during his journey of life so as to enable him to reach his objective of obtaining emancipation and salvation for his soul and attain self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. When this happens, the wise person is said to have reached his true spiritual destination, while if he remains trapped in the cycle of birth and death he has missed his spiritual target. Even as lampposts along the highway not only illuminate the path below but also act as a beacon for travelers who might otherwise be lost in the pitch darkness of the night, the Vedas and the Upanishads guide the spiritual aspirant onwards in his spiritual journey by showing him the correct path to be followed. They act as a beacon of hope and crutches for weary spiritual travelers who are in desperate need of help and guidance in the wilderness that the world is.]

For a wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic, the cosmic ethereal sound called the Naad³, represented by the ethereal word OM complete with its Bindu, is like the grand cosmic male phallus with the drop of semen dripping from it. It is a state of eclectic bliss and ecstasy, and it is a symbolic abode of Shiva and his divine cosmic energy called Shakti⁴ (167).

[Note—¹The word Peeth means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In practical life it refers to a center of temporal or religious authority or sect. In the context of the body the word refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma at its center. These four are the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath. According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy of creation) is located. They are the following—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddyan/Udiyan Peeth. These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described in verse nos. 171-175 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad. We can compare these four Peeths with the four corners of square or a rectangle. These corners decide the exact shape and size of the figure because the lines that form the outline simply join these corners. They are also like the four cardinal points of the celestial globe—viz. north, east, south and west.

²The four Vedas are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva.

³The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source called Brahm. This is the symbolic Bindu which is represented as the dot put on the top of the geometrical symbol for Naad which is also used as a monosyllable Mantra known as OM. The Naad consists of such sound frequencies that are not normally audible to the human ear just like the case of the radio waves present all around us in ether that are not heard by us except for the use of special instrument called the 'radio'. The frequencies of the sound waves of Naad require specially trained neurons in the mind to be heard by an ascetic, and this fine-tuning is

done by meditation and contemplation. Ancient sages and seers who did hear this Naad pondered over the matter and came to the conclusion that the monosyllable word OM was the nearest analogue to the sound produced by Naad, and hence they prescribed it as a synonym for Naad.

The symbol of OM and Naad is 'ॐ', and it resembles the sixth Sanskrit alphabet which is a long vowel sound resembling 'Ooo' as in 'boot, root or soot'. In the symbol of OM, the Bindu or the 'dot' is placed on the top of a crescent-shaped moon or a concave bowl placed on the top of this letter such that this dot is hanging at its focal point. In modern parlance we can imagine what it signifies. This dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad originated when the process of creation first started (what the modern science recognizes as the 'Big Bang'). This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos.

The human skull is also concave from the inner side, and the brain is located just below it—resembling the 'Chandra and Bindu' placed on the sign for OM. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or 'dot' generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra. These are the points in the body where the cosmic sound waves are caught hold of by the sensory receptors in the brain which then transmit this data to the brain's processing area which in turn translates this signal as Naad. The skull and the brain are the receptors in the human body that catch the signals emanating from the cosmos just like a modern day roof-top dish antenna catch signals from orbiting satellites to transmit audio and visual signals originating in some far away land to be seen and heard by us in our homes directly. Just like a simple short-circuit in this electronic device can blank-out the signals, the slightest digression and carelessness on the part of the spiritual aspirant would prevent him from hearing the Naad. But that does not mean that the Naad is not present in the surrounding ether.

The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This analogy is cited to give a physically imaginable and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad. This apparatus is called the 'Naad Lingam' in Canto 2, verse no. 6 in this Upanishad, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-10 narrate how the audible word is created by this Naad.

In brief, the concept of Naad and Bindu have been employed by this Upanishad to describe how the wise ascetic realises that this cosmic dynamic energy has been utilized by the body to empower him with majestic powers that makes him as powerful as Brahm.

Refer verse no. 178 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad also.

⁴This is also why this condition is compared to the 'cosmic union' of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm's ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic shiver and shook the ether to create vibrations which in turn set in motion the process of creation. In the terms of Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti (the dynamic cosmic energy and the female aspect of creation) is called Prakriti (Nature) in the context of Brahm who himself is called the Purush (the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation).

The philosophy propounded here in the context of Yoga pertains to the Tantra school of Indian philosophy which is a modification of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies. It recognizes that this creation came into being by the union (Yoga) between Shiva (the supreme transcendental and imperishable Brahm) principle and Shakti (the dynamic Shiva) principle. They are not separate from one another, but a unified principle called 'Shiva-Shakti'. The relationship between Shiva and Shakti is like that of fire (Shiva) and its power to burn (Shakti). In the inactive state it is Shiva, while in its active state it is Shakti. They are inseparable from one another; they are non-dual two-in-one entity. The Shiva is 'Nirguna Brahm' wherein the divine attributes called the various Gunas (qualities and characteristics unique to every individual and which determine his temperament and nature) are inherent but lying in a dormant, latent and neutral state. When these Gunas become active and begin to unravel or manifest themselves in the process of creation and its evolution, the same Shiva (Brahm) becomes 'Saguna'—i.e. with Gunas.

From this Shiva's cosmic Shakti or dynamism comes into existence the Naad, the cosmic vibrations in ether that translate into sound element. Since any sound must have a central point of origin, there developed the concept of the Bindu, the dot or the central point. The Bindu represented the Shiva principle which provided the first spark of life to set off the process of creation, drawing from the vision of a drop of the male semen which is a necessary spark to initiate the process of physical life in this world. The crescent-shaped bowl called the Chandra placed on the top of the geometrical sign for OM was the cosmic womb into which this cosmic sperm was dropped. Their union resulted in the first conception and the eventual evolution and devolvement of the vast creation. The two primary components of creation are therefore the 'Bindu' and the 'Chandra'—the former symbolising the cosmic sperm and the latter standing for the cosmic bowl or womb where this sperm was placed.

The Naad and Bindu are collectively called the *Chandra Bindu*. It is a sign resembling a concave crucible or shallow plate over which is placed a dot at its focal point. It is a 'moon-like spot' and hence called the 'Chandra' (moon) 'Bindu' (a dot). It is a nasal sound equivalent to the letter 'N' as in the words can't, mount, taint or taunt. The Moon is regarded as the heavenly pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of life and the ambrosial fluid of eternity and bliss. The Bindu is a drop of this Amrit. Hence, in metaphysics the term Chandra Bindu is used to refer to the supreme transcendental Brahm and the spiritual state of realisation of pure conscious 'self' when the aspirant enjoys bliss and experiences a surge of ecstasy. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he tastes Amrit dripping from the Moon.

The primary cell of the sperm and the egg are both single, and they resemble a 'dot' because of their microscopic form. Therefore the word 'Bindu' would refer to both the cosmic sperm as well as the cosmic ovum—hardly distinguishable from one another in their primary form as consisting of a single generative cell. It is their union that creates the conducive environ for producing the spontaneous burst of energy called the 'Shakti'. It is just like two ingredients in physical science that remain harmless and neutral when separate but produce an explosive mixture when brought together.

By extension, just like a single-celled male sperm and a single-celled female egg bring about the creation of the complex structure of the living being consisting of his gross physical body that is visible and so powerful, the 'Beej Mantra' is the seed from which the external form of the main body of any given Mantra is generated. The word 'Beej' in the context of Mantras means a 'seed' from which the Mantra evolved, and it would be analogous to this 'Bindu'.

From the union of Shiva and Shakti evolved the twenty four Tattvas (elements) as follows—one Mahat + one Ahankar + the ten sense organs called the Indris (five organs

of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the five subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the five gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) = 23 total. To this is added the inherent ‘Shakti’ or energy that empowers them all to function according to their assigned duties, and the total comes to $23 + 1 = 24$ in all.

From the Shiva (the attributeless Brahm) principle at the macro level evolved the five Gods or deities—viz. Vishnu, Brahma, Ishan, Rudra and Sada-Shiva. The Shakti resides in the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center in the human body, located in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra situated at the base of the spine.

The Jiva or the living being is none but this Shiva (Brahm) himself, but covered by a veil of ignorance and mired by delusions. When Yoga and other methods spiritual awakening are employed to remove this veil, the aspirant is able to arouse the latent divinity in him and realise the Shiva principle inherent to him. In other words, he becomes self and Brahm realised. This is his Moksha or Mukti—emancipation and salvation, or liberation and deliverance. He becomes empowered to find liberation and deliverance from the dark dungeon of ignorance and delusions.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 178 = The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)¹.

The Bindu is in the form of Naad located in the middle of the eyebrows. This is the site of the Mana (mind and intellect)² (178).

[Note—¹The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would be the Atma around which the rest of the being of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that when we complete the hemisphere it would be circle.

²Every circle has a central point, the focal point. The entire existence and the world of the creature revolve around his mind and intellect, because the Upanishads have repeatedly stressed that this world exists because the creature has wished it to be there. Should the mind decide to eliminate this existence, to terminate it, it can simply shut its attention and divert it away from it and the world would immediately cease to matter to the creature. The mind and its other aspect the intellect is like the sun in the sky because it illuminates the world for the creature in the sense that he becomes aware of its

existence because the mind receives the sensory signals emanating from the world and perceived by the various sense organs of perception. It then decides that the world and its sense objects are there. If the mind is diverted elsewhere, the world would be plunged in darkness inspite of there being bright daylight. In other words, it is the Mana that 'illuminates' the world for the creature much like the celestial sun. Therefore, the area of the body where the mind and intellect reside is the central or focal point of the body much like the sun in the sky, and it is around it that the entire existential being of the creature revolves. A man without the mind and intellect is called 'mad' for this precise reason because his behaviour and deeds are unpredictable and chaotic. Since every aspect of this creation revolves around Brahm, and since it is the latter that illuminates the creation in the form of consciousness and life, it is a natural corollary that the Mana is the natural habitat of Brahm as symbolised by the latter's abode in the Vyom Chakra and the Agya Chakra—the former representing the higher state of Brahm's abode in the sky element, and the latter representing Brahm's ability to show light and illumination to the creature through his faculty of intellect. From the angle of anatomy, the former is represented by the cranium and the latter by the cerebrum.

The Mana is the 'focal point' of the decision making process for the creature. The positioning of the Bindu at the midpoint of the eyebrows is a symbolic indication of the fact that the brain's stupendous powers to think and analyse are located in this region. It is like the headlight of a car which shows the driver the path ahead. That is why when we concentrate and deeply contemplate upon certain thing, our forehead is furrowed and it physically appears that the entire energy and powers of the brain are concentrated at the mid point of the eye. This is therefore also metaphorically called the location of the 'third eye of wisdom'. The ancient sages had visualised that the focal point of the two eyes would naturally be somewhere behind them at a point equidistant from them. This would be the spot where the images formed by what the two eyes see could be synchronised and produce a three dimensional image of the object seen. A three dimensional picture is more clear as compared to a two dimensional view of the same thing. This is indicated by saying that the 'third' eye of wisdom represented by the Bindu is located at the point where the two eyebrows meet. The word 'third' is indicative of the 'three-dimensional' effect that wisdom and enlightenment creates for a wise and erudite ascetic.

The Naad is the cosmic sound generated in the center of the cosmic hemisphere. This hemisphere has a concave inner surface (or convex outer surface) resembling the skull from the inside. The Bindu in this case would be the brain which receives signals from the outside world and makes the creature aware of the latter's existence.

This shape of the skull also helps to concentrate the energy and waves originating in the vast cosmos on to the Bindu which is located at the mid-point of the two eyebrows. The curvature of the skull facilitate this process by helping to concentrate the cosmic sound waves on this point which are then caught by the sensory receptors of the brain, which then interprets these waves as 'sound' called Naad. This is similar to our modern day satellite dishes that dot every other home to catch television signal from all corners of the world and bring them within reach of our eyes so that we are able to have knowledge of what is happening in distant corners of the world without actually going there. This is a metaphoric way of saying that we have the benefit of deep insight into things that we cannot see directly. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism it would be the knowledge of the esoteric and mystical Brahm that is omnipresent and ubiquitous but beyond the reach of ordinary creature's receptive capabilities.

The importance of repetition of the Mantra OM lies in the fact that it produces a booster effect and enhances the resonance of this cosmic Naad so much so that it reaches a crescendo and overwhelms the practitioner; he hears nothing, he feels nothing except the vibrations of the Naad.

Refer verse no. 167 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad, as well as Canto 3, verse no. 11, and Canto 5, verse nos. 27-28, 34 also in this context.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 6 = The place (Mooladhar) from where such an eclectic and esoteric divine Mantra originates is called Naad Lingam and it is consciousness personified¹. An aspirant who knows about it, who is aware of its spiritual significance and importance is said to have obtained Mukti (liberation and deliverance) even while he is alive, i.e. he obtains ‘Jivan Mukti’² (6).

[Note—¹Earlier Canto 1, verse no. 168 has asserted that there is a symbolic Shiva Lingam situated on this Mooladhar Chakra. This Lingam is the symbol of the deity Shiva who represents the supreme transcendental Brahm in his greatest glory of being a personification of eternal truth, auspiciousness and cosmic consciousness. When an ascetic is in deep state of meditation and contemplation, he hears the cosmic sound called Naad. The shape of the Shiva Lingam is like a short cylinder with a dome at the top and accompanied by a ring encircling it from all the sides at the lower end, a structure that is acoustically designed to facilitate the hearing of this cosmic Naad. The circular ring under this Lingam, called the Arghaa, represents the crescent moon placed under the Bindu or dot on the top of the symbol of Naad which is the sixth Sanskrit alphabet, i.e. the long vowel ‘Ooo’ as in root. The composite structure represents the Shiva-Shakti principle of creation. Therefore, an ascetic who becomes wise and enlightened enough to understand all the intricacies of Yoga and the profound effect of Mantra used during the process is indeed liberated from the bondage of his physical body and establishes himself in his pure conscious form of the Atma which is Shiva or Brahm personified. In this context, refer verse nos. 9-10, 13 of Canto 2.

²The Mantra used to enable the ascetic realise who truly he is, is ‘So-a-ham’, i.e. ‘that (Brahm) is me’. He in other words realises that his true identity is not his gross and perishable body but the eternally truthful Atma personifying Shiva, the cosmic truth and consciousness. A person who realises his true identity as being his Atma and not the body is deemed to have broken free from the fetters of ignorance that had made him captive of the body under the impression that the latter was ‘he’. Once enlightenment dawns upon him when he understands the true import of the Mantra ‘So-a-ham’, this wrong impression is immediately dispelled. This is why emphasis is laid in earlier verse no. 4 on understanding the real meaning and essence of the Mantra to derive actual benefit from it, besides the fact that only an intelligent aspirant can do so because it requires a higher level of intellect to make it possible.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 2 = it is that divine and eclectic entity which is known as ‘Akchar’ or the one who is imperishable and immune to decay and destruction, it is that eternal and all-pervading entity which is symbolised by the great cosmic reverberating sound known as Naad, and it is also known as ‘Shabda Brahm’ or the supreme Divinity revealed in the form of the ethereal ‘sound’ called Naad, which in turn is at the root of the divine Mantra OM and the entire spectrum of the spoken ‘word’. [Refer verse nos. 5-11 of this Canto.]

The divine subtle cosmic energy that supports the entire creation is present inherently in the Mooladhar Chakra, and it also known as ‘Bindu’ or Shakti [2]. (1-2).

“Canto 3, verse no. 3 = It is in this Bindu (the point-source of ethereal energy in the cosmos) that Naad (the all-pervading cosmic vibrations in ether that ultimately translate into sound) originates¹. This is just like the case of a sprout of a huge tree having its origin in a small seed². The subtle energy of sound present in the Naad is called

‘Pashyanti’, and it is utilised by a wise and erudite ascetic to see and visualise the rest of the world around him³ (3).

[Note—¹Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a manifestation of the energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apan wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound as demonstrated to science students in a school physics laboratory. Another example to show how sound has a pinpoint Bindu or dot as its origin is the ripple created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it. The ripples would originate in a single point where the stone had touched the surface of the water, and then the waves spread out in concentric circles, one after another, to far corners of the lake. Since sound also travels in the form of waves in cosmic ether which fills the entire space of the sky, this example would show why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot; a single point) by the ancient sage who had first visualised it.

²This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. One is left marveling at the wonderful imagery used in the Upanishads to explain concepts.

³The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the activated dynamic forces of creation, or the ‘Shakti of Brahm’. The inherent energy that is present in this Naad is this dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body, but the eye functions as an organ of sight only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight located in the brain to see. The apparatus of the eye has an aperture or hole, called the pupil, located in the center of the iris, and it is this ‘hole’ through which the eye actually sees. In the present context, this ‘hole’ (pupil) would be the ‘Bindu’, while the eye itself would be the Naad in the center of which the Bindu is located because the structure of the eye derives its significance only due to this pupil. But when we look deeper we observe that the entire apparatus has importance for the creature only because it enables him to ‘see’. This ‘power to see’ and the ‘faculty of sight’ would be like Brahm in the context of the cosmos because though it is hidden from view but it is nevertheless the only component in the entire setup that drives it.

In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterised by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that sound characterizes this world as a ‘living’ entity as opposite to being a ‘dead’ one is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave-yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of vibrant life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti are located in the Mooladhar Chakra. That is why it is called the site of the Naad Lingam as described in Canto 2, verse nos. 5-6. Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 11 = Since Saraswati is the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom besides being the goddess of speech, it follows that such an ascetic (as described in previous verses) is himself a creator of the Vedas, various scriptures and Purans (ancient histories)¹.

The Bindu and Naad² are like the Moon and the Sun³, or like the Agni (fire) and the Vayu (wind)⁴ respectively.

Hence, a spiritual aspirant who has the grand ability to bear both these two primary forces of creation can have the required prowess, aptitude and skills to become a symbolic creator of the Vedas, Purans and other scriptures⁵ (11).

[Note—¹In other words, an ascetic who has realised the true divine potential of his Atma is blessed with such mystical powers that he need not study the various scriptures separately to become learned and wise, for all the eclectic virtues that are purported and implied in the teaching of the scriptures in the form of their various tenets, maxims and axioms automatically come to him on their own. Another interpretation would be this—the Atma is Brahm manifested, and since all the scriptures are creations of Brahm in the form of divine ethereal words that are eternal and imperishable, and this Atma is the one which makes the ascetic speak these words by harnessing the Baikhari Shakti, if follows that the words spoken by the ascetic are the words of wisdom spoken by none else but Brahm. That ‘Shakti’ aspect of Brahm which reveals itself in the form of words of wisdom is personified in the form of the Goddess Saraswati.

²The Bindu means a ‘point-source’, and Naad refers to the ‘un-manifest cosmic energy in the form of sound’ that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point-source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point-source to all the directions of creation much like the rays of the sun radiating out from its disc to illuminate the vast realm of this world. Refer note to verse no. 3 of the present Canto 3 also.

²The Moon is a passive source of light because it simply reflects the light of the Sun falling on it, and hence the active source of light is the Sun. Had there been no Sun, the Moon would not show its light. In the context of Brahm and creation this analogy applies most aptly. The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would have remained unknown and un-revealed; it would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti which resembles the grand Sun in the sky—brilliant, splendrous, potent and fiery in its form, whilst the principal itself is passive and reflected in its own glory like the Moon shining in the glory of the Sun. That is why Brahm is said to be personified grand virtues of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness represented by the Moon, while Shakti is a personification of energy, heat, vigour, vitality and dynamism symbolised by the Sun.

³The same analogy applies to the fire and wind elements in this context. Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the ‘fire element’. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the ‘wind element’.

⁵In other words, an ascetic who realises that he is Brahm personified as his subtle Atma or pure consciousness residing inside his inner self on the one hand, and as the various functions that this Brahm or Atma performs with the help of the gross body, one of which is the speech or the spoken word on the other hand, he is said to be an enlightened and wise ascetic. Since scriptures are synonymous with wisdom, erudition, eclectic knowledge and enlightenment, such an ascetic is deemed to be an expert in them, a fact metaphorically emphasised by saying that he can create these scriptures.]

“Canto 4, verse no. 47 = When an accomplished practitioner is able to focus his mind during Yoga and become completely engrossed in hearing the Naad (the cosmic sound heard during deep meditation and contemplation, the sound that reverberates through his entire being and vibrates through his nerves and veins), he is said to acquire the mystical powers to hear distant sounds not normally heard by the ears. [That is, he develops the power to hear about things that had occurred in the distant past, are happening in some distant place out of earshot in the present time, and would happen in the future. His brain is so trained because he would not have heard the Naad in the first place if it had not been sufficiently fine-tuned. He develops transcendental powers of perception and deep insight so much so that he can foresee things and happenings in advance, or can have the hindsight long enough to see them occurring long back in time. It also means he can hear voices of the Spirits in heaven, the words of Gods and the Mantras that remain eternally etched in the cosmic ether in the form of sound waves.]

Similarly, when he has focused his mind and concentrated his attention on the Bindu (the dot size spot on the forehead between the two eyebrows where the source of wisdom and enlightenment is said to be located), he is able to have a deep insight into everything. [That is, he develops a high degree of practical wisdom and intelligence that pertains to this material world along with the mystical powers and astounding ability to have an insight into the paranormal. These help him to acquire a sight that is beyond the normal sight of the eye, and have a transcendental, super-human power of vision.] (47).

“Canto 5, verse no. 28 = Brahm, in its dynamic form and active principle is represented by the word Bindu (a dot or point source of energy or Shakti). This Brahm has three types of bodies—viz. the gross, the subtle, and the sublime and transcendental.

The gross body of this Brahm is the ‘Bindu’ (drop) of semen. [This is because the sperm in this drop or ‘Bindu’ of semen has all the vital life-infusing capacity and ability that is the hallmark of Brahm. The semen is the gross body of the sperm just like the gross body of the creature which harbours the vital spark of life-consciousness in the form of the Atma.]

The subtle body of this Brahm is the ‘Bindu’ manifested as the Shakti or stupendous energy and life giving vitality present in the form of the five legendary Fires of creation called ‘Panch-Agni’ (28).

[Note—¹The five cosmic holy fires that reveal the astounding active dynamism of Brahm are called Pancha-Agni. They have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are the following—(a) ‘Gaarhyaptya’ (the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice), (b) ‘Dakshinaagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) ‘Aahawaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’ (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) ‘Aawasathya’ (the fire of the later Smriti period).

However, the present Upanishad enumerates a set of different five Fires as described in verse nos. 29-32 of Canto 5. They are Kaalagni—the fire that burns in hell and is the cause of doomsday annihilation (verse no. 29), Samulaagni—the fire burning inside the body which creates a roar similar to the cosmic Naad (verse no. 30), the latent fire present in bones and such hard substances as rocks (verse no. 31), the Electric, and the Sun (verse no. 32).]

“Canto 6, verse no. 21 = The cosmic sound called Naad which is heard in the head during the practice of Yoga (which resembles the humming of the bumble bee as described in verse no. 19 of this Upanishad) is distinct from all other worldly sounds. This is because the Naad is heard even without speaking or uttering any word and it is also not the sound heard when one sings or a musical instrument is being played. That is why it is called ‘Anahat’, or the sound produced without any friction or one entity being rubbed against another or hitting another to produce it. In other words, it is ‘self produced’. [Obviously there is no beating of anything or friction between anything in the cosmic bowl where the primary sound of Naad was produced. It is simply ‘self produced’.]

In the core or the central point of this cosmic Naad is the entity that is self-illuminated, and hence called ‘Joyti’ which means ‘light’. This subtly visible Joyti has an invisible subtle component called its Mana (mind-intellect complex). When this Mana is dissolved (eliminated or decimated) into nothingness, it is said to be transformed into the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu (21).

[Note—The cosmic Naad is the invisible and attributeless body of Brahm. The situation can be compared to an oil lantern which burns with a soft hissing sound. When one comes in the vicinity of this lantern, one would hear this hiss which makes him aware that something is burning nearby. Then one sees the light and realises that the sound is emanating from it. The light is the visible aspect and the hissing sound is the invisible sign indicating the presence of the lamp. The wick of the lantern is the Mana which makes it possible for both the light and the sound to come into being, because had there been no wick in the lantern the very existence of both would not have been possible in the first place. And finally the oil in the lantern is the central cause by which the lantern gets its light or the ability to light the world around it, and therefore it is like the hidden and subtle Lord Vishnu who is at the core but behind the curtain in the whole game plan of this creation. When the lantern’s wick is cut off from the tip, the light and sound would automatically be cut out, but as long as there is oil in it, it can always be lighted again by raising the wick.

In the context of this manifested world, the Pran, the vital wind force of life which is a metaphor for life itself, is the Naad because any sound requires the medium of air to travel in waves. All forms of life are characterised by being constantly on the motion like the waves of sound, and sound itself is also a symbol of life inasmuch that where there is no sound at all we say that there is the ‘silence of death’. The visible world is the ‘revealed’ or ‘lighted’ aspect of Brahm; the world is actually a manifestation of the invisible and attributeless Brahm in its gross and visible form having attributes. The world is the ‘lighted’ aspect of Brahm because it is the light emanating from the self-illuminated Brahm or consciousness that lights up the world for the creature, for had there been no consciousness everything would be submerged in pitch darkness just like the period that immediately follows after doomsday. This light and consciousness not only illuminates the world but also indirectly illuminates Brahm just like the light of the sun which lights up the world, gives it its life, energy and vitality and also tells us about the presence of the sun in the sky. Another example is the glow-worm which also is self-illuminated and its presence is known by its own light. Therefore, the enlightened view of the world is one in which the latter is seen in the glory and majesty of the Brahm.

The world can also be compared to the moon because the world is visible as a reflection of the majestic glory of Brahm just like the case of the moon which shines by the reflected light of the sun. Further, since the world is the creation of the Mana (mind of the creature) and the Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, this analogy seems apt. The world exists because of the Mana, i.e. it is the mind that enlightens the Atma which

is the creature's true 'self' that such and such world exists. If the Mana is shut off as is done during meditation, the world would cease to exist. When this happens, what remains? It is the pure 'self' or the pure consciousness that remains after the entire external drama is shut off from view. This Atma is Brahm personified, and Brahm and Vishnu are synonyms because the latter is another name for the Viraat Purush which is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that is invisible, attributeless and subtle as compared to the visible aspect of Brahm in the form of the gross world. It is from this invisible Viraat, an entity that is characterised by its vastness and infinite dimensions, that the rest of the visible creation, that is similarly vast and infinite, has manifested.]

“Canto 6, verse no. 48 = The cosmic ‘Maya Shakti’ (i.e. the great power of the Supreme Being to create delusions and keep the creature engrossed in its deceptions so that the cycle of creation set in motion by the Lord continues to roll on unhindered) is the grosser revelation of the dynamic powers of Brahm by which the latter created this illusion called the world. It is said to be located in the front part of the forehead and is shaped like a lotus¹. In the middle of this lotus is located the transcendental cosmic energy of Brahm which is subtle in nature and is called the Naad Shakti² (48).

[Note—¹This symbolic lotus refers to the Agya Chakra. The forehead symbolically represents the head-light of Brahm much like we have headlights in a car because the eyes of the man's body are located here. The eyes help the man to see the visible creation of Brahm which the latter has created using his maverick powers to create illusions, the power called Maya Shakti which literally means precisely this—illusion creating strength and powers. This world is the gross physical revelation of Brahm's stupendous powers to create anything desired. Maya Shakti refers to this power of Brahm—to create an illusion which is so perfect and life-like that it appears to be true from all practical view points though it is basically an illusion. This is the great mystery of creation—the world is said to be illusionary on the one hand, and it is pervaded by Brahm who is not an illusion on the other hand. The secret is that the external features of the world as we see is an illusion just like the water seen in the desert mirage, but the underlying principle that creates this illusion in the desert is a scientific truth having a sound reason. Likewise, the world is created by the ability of the mind to imagine, which is actually Brahm's maverick power on display. Brahm is regarded as being synonymous with wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge, so the subtle quality of the mind-intellect complex to be analytical, discerning, thinking intelligently, weighing all the pros and cons and then making decisions and arriving at conclusions—these qualities are the subtle revelations of Brahm. But the power of this same mind to imagine and create a astoundingly fascinating world of charming and enticing objects is a revelation of Brahm's Maya Shakti. The man sees this illusions through his eyes situated in the forehead, and this fact is represented here by saying that the ‘Maya Shakti is located in the front of the forehead’.

²As compared to this Maya Shakti which has taken a gross form of the physical world having attributes and characteristic features, the Naad Shakti is very subtle and has no physical shape or form or attributes. This is because Naad refers to the sound element which does not have any shape or form. It is like the air and sky elements which too have no form or shape. Since sound is a form of invisible energy, it is the first subtle revelation of Brahm at the cosmic level. Scientists call it the ‘Big Bang’ at the time of creation, while in the sphere of metaphysics it is called ‘Naad’—both refer to sound. The concept of Naad and its origin in a point source called the ‘Bindu’ or dot have been explained extensively elsewhere in this Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads dealing with Naad and Bindu.]

“Canto 6, verse no. 49 = At the ‘focal point’, literally called the ‘Bindu’, of this energy generation mechanism is the consciousness which has revealed itself in the form of the Jiva (living being). [This refers to the Atma which is the pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of all living beings. At the micro level of creation, this consciousness is called the Jiva, while at the macro level the same entity is known as Brahm.] (49).

“Canto 6, verse no. 71 = Constant paying of attention to and focusing of the mind on the essential element behind the concept of Bindu (i.e. by meditating upon the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) helps in the decimation of all sorts of Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearnings) that veil the aspirant and act as impediments in his spiritual pursuit and progress in it. [When the aspirant concentrates his attention on the power center called Bindu or dot in order to facilitate his meditation process, it is natural that he has to withdraw his mind and all the senses from all external influences of the world and every sort of diversions, and instead focus it on that Bindu. Otherwise he would not be able to meditate in the first place. This practice helps the mind to be trained enough to become independent and stand on its own feet; it helps the mind to learn to make itself free from all external influences and acquire sufficient strength and will power to withdraw from the outside world and remain focused on its chosen spiritual path once it decides to do so. When the mind takes this decision that it has got nothing to do with the external world of artificiality and delusions, and rather it should focus its attention on the primary spiritual goal of life which is to obtain self-realisation that leads to final liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of birth and death and its attending delusions and horrors in this world, it would remain steady and unwavering in this endeavour by eliminating everything else that causes any kind of nuisance and hindrance in it by becoming immune to all sorts of influences exerted by the natural tendency of the body to swerve towards the material comforts and pleasures offered by the charming world in order to satisfy the desire of its organs for self gratification. It ought to be noted here that this is the reason why in early stages of the practice of meditation, the practitioner is advised to focus his eyesight on any object in front of him, such as a picture of his chosen deity or even a simple dot on the wall. This is to train the mind to remain focused on a ‘Bindu’ or dot or any specific object for prolonged periods of time, instead of constantly jumping from object to object quickly which is its natural habit.]

When this is brought about, the Pran Vayu (the vital winds in the body that keep it alive) also merges and becomes one with the Mana, because the mind (Mana) which is not influenced by any worldly desires and passions (called Vasanas) that the body naturally has becomes free from any kind of morally and spiritually degrading and tainting affects caused by the latter. Being superior to the vital winds, the mind can then exert its controlling affect on them, thereby effectively controlling the body itself through these vital winds. [The winds have a natural tendency to remain restless and be on constant move much like the mind. This is evident from the fact that the body continues to carry out its different functions internally even when the man is apparently sleeping and not appearing to do anything externally. While awake, the organs continue to perceive, voluntarily or involuntarily—such as the case when the skin continues to feel the bite of an insect or the touch of anything warm or cold even though the man might

have closed his eyes, shut his ears, clamped his mouth tight and pinched his nose shut. Since all the functions of the body are controlled by the vital winds, when the body is brought under control by the practice of meditation, it is deemed that all these vital winds have also been controlled. Again, since it is the mind that is the ultimate controlling center of the body, when it is self regulated and under control of the spiritual aspirant it becomes very easy for the latter to control everything else by the medium of the mind. So, when the vital winds have been brought under control as a result of practice of meditation, it is said that they have been subjugated by the mind. The vital winds and the body which is driven by these vital winds would then obey the command of the mind—and therefore remain under the control of the practitioner of Yoga. A wise ascetic has already become enlightened about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, the artificiality and the transient nature of its charms and pleasures, and has learnt that if he has to obtain final freedom from the prison of his body and being enslaved to this world and its sense objects, then he must avoid them completely by diverting his mind (Mana) and vital winds (Prans) away from it, and instead focus their combined energy to help him in progressing ahead in his spiritual path.] (71).

“Canto 6, verse no. 72 = What is called Naad (the cosmic sound represented by the Mantra OM) is also known as Bindu (the metaphoric ‘dot or point-source’ from where this sound emanates) as well as Chitta (the invisible and subtle sub-conscious mind which works behind the scene). In other words, they are basically the same and are simply different manifestations in Nature (called Prakriti) of the same non-dual entity (known as Brahm). [In other words, the invisible, un-manifested and attributeless non-dual entity known as Brahm—which is at the core of this entire creation known as Prakriti, and which is represented symbolically by a ‘dot’ or a ‘point source which is vested with all divine authority, cosmic energy, stupendous strength and powers of creation’—has revealed itself in different subtle components of this creation known as Prakriti or Nature at the macro level, and the various subtle components of an individual’s nature at the micro level. Therefore, though each component appears to be distinct from the other, they are basically the same divine entity revealed in that form.]

When the spiritual aspirant is able to realise the oneness and non-dual nature of all these units of creation (Prakriti), he obtains immense contentedness of spiritual realisation and enlightenment which gives him great bliss and happiness, a great sense of joy of knowing the esoteric and sublime Truth and Reality of creation (72).

[Note—The concept of Naad and Bindu has been elaborately explained earlier Cantos of this Upanishad. It is only when the Chitta (the subtler aspect of the mind; the sub-conscious) is totally focused on meditation and contemplation that one is able to hear the Naad reverberating in his Naadis and the head where the brain is located. The Bindu in this context would refer to the area of the brain which perceives the sound and interprets it as an intelligent signal—i.e. the so-called ‘point source’ where the sound waves of the cosmic Naad are monitored and deciphered in the brain as meaningful signals. This location is the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, the approximate area of the brain called the cerebrum. This area is also the site responsible for wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge. The entire process of focusing the Chitta on a Bindu to hear the Naad requires intense concentration and practice. That is why when we concentrate our attention on some subject requiring intense concentration of the mind, when we are pensive and submerged in some deep thoughts, our forehead creases and furrows involuntarily in order to focus on the subject at hand.]

“Canto 6, verse no. 73 = In fact, it is the Mana (mind) that is the Bindu or point source of the entire creation—its origin, its sustenance and its development. This Bindu originates from the Mana just like the milk has its origin in the cow. [In other words, this world exists because the mind has wanted it to come into existence and then it is the mind that keeps it there because it wants it to be there. The center in the brain that control its power to imagine is the metaphoric ‘Bindu’ or point from where the entire world is unfolded in the way of an imagination. Once this chain is set in motion, it is difficult to control or role it back much like the milk produced in the body of the cow. Once this milk is generated and begins to ooze out from the cow’s udder, it has to be taken out and cannot be stopped midway. Any action to the contrary would cause unnecessary inconvenience to the animal and might be very injurious to the latter’s health. That is why great emphasis is laid in the Upanishads on the point that if one wishes to get rid of the world and its associated problems, the only way to do so is to control the mind.] (73).



OM and NAAD:

The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 3

Relationship between Naad and OM

The cosmic sound called 'Naad' was represented by the word OM and its equivalent geometrical symbol . Hence, OM () is the monogram of that Naad, and the word OM is the 'Mantra' or word form of it.

The seven fundamental notes of Indian classical music— Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dhi, Na— are said to have originated from the basic vibratory modes of the sublime sound of OM in Nature. The Vedic quote— 'Ekoham Bahusyaami'— implies that all the sounds, all the energies, all movements and actions and everything else existing in the universe has originated in the vibrations of the cosmic 'Naad'.

The cosmic 'Naad' was meaningless and unexplainable until the time ancient sages envisioned the word OM to encapsulate the whole gamut of sound—from its beginning in silence till its end in silence. Therefore, OM represented 'Naad' as well, because the latter was a sound, albeit as music or vibration, originating against the background of nothing or silence in the void of the cosmos and will ultimately end in nothing or silence of the cosmos.

Ancient civilisations of the world had different words for this OM— e.g. Tibetans called it 'Hum', Muslims called it 'Amin', the Romans, the Greeks, the Hebrews and the Christians called it 'Amen'. The word Amen means, 'faithful, sure'. The syllables and the sound of OM are representative of the cosmic 'Naad'. All speech and thought are derived from the one self-existent sound called OM.


While OM has a more 'philosophical' dimension and meaning, the Naad, which even an uneducated Yogi can hear on practice, is more like 'a music' having a physical dimension which even an uneducated person can hear and enjoy. Whereas erudition, genius and scholarship is required to understand the divine 'word' manifested and known as the Vedas (which were originally spoken words), the 'Naad' needed a fine tuned body to be heard. While the 'word' gives wisdom, the 'Naad' gives bliss to the aspirant/seeker even as knowledge gives enlightenment and the music soothes ruffled nerves. 'Naad' is the musical sound generated by the cosmic vibration emanating from Brahm that resulted

in the manifestation of Nature and the subsequent creation. It is like the ‘vibration of cosmic motor or generator at work’.

Swami Yogaanand noted that ‘everything in the universe is composed of energy. The only apparent difference between solids, liquids, gases, sound and light is merely a difference in their vibratory rates. By chanting of the word OM representing the cosmic ‘Naad’, the divine vibration, we can increase the body’s supply of cosmic energy’.

Thorough research works¹ have proved the healing powers of ‘OM chanting and meditating’ on its symbol or syllables. It is said that 12,000 chanting of OM removes all sins (i.e. purifies or cleanses the inner-self and mind) while 12,000 recitations daily for a period of one year can bring realisation of the absolute truth or Brahm. [¹ (i) Indian journal of physiology and pharmacology, 39 (4), pages 418-420; and 42, pages 57-63. (ii) International journal of neuroscience, 76, no. 1-2, page 87-93.]

According to Yoga theory of ‘OM’, the first syllable ‘A’ starts in our chest at the heart (Anahat Chakra), it moves upwards with the sound ‘O’ or ‘U’ in the throat (Vishudha Chakra) and ends with the sound ‘M’ in the head (the Agna and Sahastraar Chakra). Thus, chanting and meditating on OM represents the upwards movement of the energy of the Pran (vital wind sustaining life in a creature) along the spine in conjunction with the other wind forces being pushed up through the spine by the activated ‘Kundalini’ lying at the base of it.

There are many meanings behind the Vedic sacred syllables collectively called OM. It is a symbolic representative of the cosmic energy field. George Feuerstein says in his book ‘the Yoga tradition’ that OM is held to be or to express the pulse of the cosmos itself. It is the universal sound, eternally resounding in the universe, which was deemed to be the very origin of the cosmos, the created world’. The symbol  is the geometrical equivalent of its three constituent syllables— A, U, M.

According to Vedanta practitioners, the letter ‘A’ symbolises the waking state of consciousness, the letter ‘U’ represents the dream state and the letter ‘M’ the deep-sleep state of consciousness. The entire word OM comprising of these three letters symbolises the realisation of the cosmic divinity within oneself, within the individual creature himself. This is in perfect sync with the Upanishadic philosophy that ‘the supreme Brahm resides in the individual; they are one and the same, non-dual and synonymous with each other’. Even the Bible says, ‘For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us’ (2 Corinthians, 1/20).

Saying ‘God is Word’ is giving a tangible and physical form to God, but saying ‘Word is God’ is making him subtle as the sound. Whether or not sound is audible, it is present nonetheless everywhere around us, in this world as well as in the cosmos.

‘Naad’ is also called ‘Adi-Mantra’ or the first syllable that was pronounced by Brahm at the beginning of creation. ‘In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, the same was in the beginning with God’ (Bible, Gospel St. John, 1/1-2); ‘these things saith the ‘Amen’, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God’ (Bible, Revelation, 3/14). The word ‘Amen’ refers to the Sanskrit counterpart OM.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* asserts that ‘Prajapati Brahma or the ‘Viraat-Purush’ mediated for the purpose of creation of ‘Lokas’. Due to his severe ‘Tapa’ (penances and prolonged meditation), the ‘Tri-vidya’ (the essential and fundamental knowledge of

creation represented by the three Vedas, the Rig, Yajur and Sam) sprouted in his bosom or mind, and this knowledge enabled him to speak the first three syllables of creation—(i) ‘Bhu’ (भूः), (ii) ‘Bhuvaha’ (भूवः), and (iii) ‘Swaha’ (स्वः). Then Brahma reviewed those words and from them were produced their refined counterparts the letters ‘A, U, and M’. These three letters compositely were called ‘Omkaar’ or the sounds which represented ‘Pranav’ which is the cosmic ‘Naad’. Even as veins and capillaries spread out as a net in a leaf of a plant, the whole spectrum of speech and voice is pervaded by ‘Omkaar’. Verily, ‘Omkaar’ is everything there is’ (Chandogya Upanishad, 2/23/2-3).

In *Chaturved Upanishad* it is also mentioned that Brahma turned his face in the four cardinal directions and pronounced the 1st syllables of creation —Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Janaha. These words crystallised into the Vedas symbolising primary body of knowledge and the various ‘Lokas’ or worlds.

We have already seen that Brahm, who is represented by the ‘Naad’ or ‘OM’ (which is also called ‘Pranav’), is eternal and infinite. The Bible says— ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away but my worlds shall not pass away’ (Gospel of St. Matthew, 24/35; St. Mark, 13/31; St. Luke, 21/33), ‘I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Revelation, 22/13).

The *Maitrayanu Upanishad* of Sam Veda says, ‘The revelation of the vital wind force of life called Pran or that faculty which has the power to speak and sing, is ‘Omkaar’. The ‘Omkaar’ is that ‘Pran’ manifested as speech. The world that was present in the beginning was the progenitor of all that exists’ (5/4).

Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 1 of Atharva Veda tradition says “The esoteric, enigmatic, ethereal and sublime ‘Akshar’ OM (literally meaning the ‘word OM’, but also implying an entity that is imperishable and eternal, which is the supreme transcendental Brahm to which OM actually refers) is all there that exists in this creation. All that existed in the past, exists in the present, and would come into existence in the future— they are all manifestations of OM, they are all elaborations of OM because they define and reveal OM in various forms. [This word OM is a sort of name of Brahm; it is a representative of Brahm. Since everything in existence has emerged from Brahm, it follows that everything is a revelation of OM as a representative of Brahm. Therefore, this world reveals and makes the astounding glories and magnificence of OM representing Brahm clear for every creature to see and understand.]

Not only this world but whatever that exists that is beyond its limit and is beyond the imagination of the mind is also OM personified or revealed in that form. [And since OM is a name assigned to the Supreme Being known as the Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, it follows that this entire creation is Brahm manifested in its form.] (1).”

The Bible further says— ‘and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself; ... and his name is called The Word of God’ (Revelation, 19/12-13); ‘Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am’ (Gospel of St. John, 8/58). The phrases ‘I am’ and ‘his name is called the word of God’ and ‘the Word was God’ are all indicative of the cosmic sound of the ‘Naad’ which was present in the

beginning of creation, was the only companion of Brahm before rest of the creation came into existence, and the word or name given to this sound, that is OM, can be regarded as the symbolic name given to Brahm to identify him from amongst the rest of the creation produced by him.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda says, 'one should contemplate thus — OM is Brahm, OM is the visible world, OM is an image of this world. OM is invoked at the beginning of everything and at the end of it. Brahm is obtained through OM (verse no. 8).

The word OM is very dear to Brahm. As the name of any person, when called out respectfully, makes him endeared to the caller, calling out OM reverentially immediately draws the attention of Brahm. OM is similar to an image of a God, though it is subtler than a gross image made up of stone or metal. Since OM is a word, it is indicative of life and Pran because only those who are alive can speak and breathe. Breath or Pran is the visible evidence of life.

Hence, it is the best instrument to invoke the blessing of the supreme, transcendental Lord called Brahm. It is used to start and finish all forms of worship and chanting of Mantras which are divine words or formulas, thereby indicating the 'completion of the cycle of worship or chanting'. It also metaphorically establishes that 'everything started out from Brahm, went its due course, and ultimately fell back or submerged in Brahm'. The symbolism is too obvious and glaring to be ignored.

OM is the primary, primeval and primordial, sublime, subtle and most esoteric sound of the cosmos. Its audible manifestations are the various letters forming the alphabets which combined themselves in various permutations and combinations to form words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs etc. which form the basis of any language. A deeper meditation upon this OM reveals that it is actually the all-present cosmic 'Naad' or cosmic sound. Each of the various strands of sounds present in this 'Naad' can be heard distinctly by Yogis (ascetic) who are engrossed in meditation. These sounds of Naad resemble the 'Music' emanating from various musical instruments (Naadbindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda).

Therefore, whereas OM is the sublime, subtle and un-manifest aspect of sound, which incidentally is the first manifestation of Brahm, its manifest and gross revelation is the speech and voice of a creature. This voice when sung is called 'the Sam' or the song of the ancients as encapsulated in the words of the Vedas, specially the Sam Veda. It is said that 'the essence of speech is the 'Richa' (the hymn of the Vedas), the essence of 'Richa' is the 'Sam' (the song), and the essence of 'Sam' is 'Udgitha' (singing of the song) (Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda, 1/1/2).

The word OM is a sound symbol representing the supreme reality called Brahm. Brahm is not an object that can be perceived by sense organs, nor can it be comprehended by the mind or a thought that can be reflected upon by the intellect using its discriminatory faculty. It is beyond human comprehension—i.e. it is unknown to humankind. To understand anything which is unknown, one has to proceed from the known factors. An unknown entity cannot be explained by using other unknown factors. Of all the factors known to man, the subtlest is sound. The realm of the 'known' world consists of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space in progressive order of

subtlety. Different permutations and combinations of these five elements constitute the entire realm of factors known to man, which is called the 'creation'.

Of the five elements, Space is the subtlest, and Sound is the essence of space. Sound is created only in space (for instance, the gap between our palms helps us to clap, but in a piece of wood, there is no space, hence no sound can be created). This sound is the subtlest because it can be perceived by only one sense organ, e.g. ear. It directly impinges on the mind and intellect apparatus. It is considered as the very first manifestation of the supreme truth since the un-manifest truth lies just beyond the manifested world. This being so, sound is the best and the subtlest vehicle to transport one from the 'terrestrial world of the known' to the 'transcendental world of the unknown'.

The question is why OM is selected out of all the sounds known to mankind to represent the supreme Brahm. The reason is that this single word represents the entire phenomenon of sound. It consists of three different and distinct sounds—viz. 'A' which is a throat sound, emanating from the root of the tongue; 'U' is created by rolling forward of the muscles of the tongue between the root and the lip of the mouth; and the letter 'M' is the concluding sound produced by closing of the lips. Hence all articulate sounds are aptly represented by the three letters A, U, M of the word OM. This word is a coordination of all that is indicative of life because only a living entity can speak, and not a dead entity.

OM represents, therefore, the supreme truth/reality which pervades the three states of consciousness—the Waker (Vishwa), the Dreamer (Taijas) and the Deep-sleeper (Pragna) states of consciousness of the creature in the terrestrial realm of the 'known world' of the creation called microcosm as far as the creature is concerned. The same logic when extended to the cosmos results in OM representing the cosmic Waker (Viraat), the cosmic Dreamer (Hiranyagarbha) and cosmic Deep-sleeper (Eshwara) aspect of macrocosm.

The silence that follows the sounding of the word OM (i.e. after closure of the lips) is called 'Amartya-OM'. This silence represents the forth state of consciousness called Turiya which is all blissful and a transcendental reality. Since sound emanates (A), expands/progresses (U) and collapses/merges (M) back into space—it naturally follows that space existed before the very advent of sound. Hence this fourth state of consciousness represents that 'Turiya state' or the pre-sound and post-sound state of all-pervading space. This silence is bliss, serenity, placidity and tranquility.

The word 'Brahmaand' meaning the universe is visualised in this context as a rising and collapsing of the waves of matter from and into the Brahm. The comprehensive knowledge of scriptures enables us to see, by deep mental reflection, that all objects (or matters, elements) are merely reflexes of forms constituted in one, irrefutable and immutable 'Truth'. And this 'truth' is Brahm of the Upanishads.

But the most astounding thing about the cosmic silence is that it is not inert and inane because it has the capacity to generate or create sound. And anything that 'creates' must have a life infusing capability. Taking a leaf from microbiology, a cell must have a nucleus so the space must also, logically, have a nucleus. This nucleus is the Atma or the soul of the cosmos or, in other words, the macrocosmic soul (Parmatma) of the cosmos which is the counterpart of the microcosmic soul (Atma) of the Jiva.

If there were no silence, we cannot hear the sound. It is the background of the silence which enables us to hear the sound in the first place. Therefore, the word symbol OM represents the entire gamut of manifest world of plurality as well as the un-manifest world of Reality. OM, the sound, represents the former (manifest) world while the silence represents the latter (un-manifest) world. When this all embracing, all-pervading, blissful internal cosmic silence is reached, the seeker becomes one with the Supreme Reality, a state of God or self realisation.

According to Vedanta, the principle by whose mere presence the intellect thinks, the mind feels, and the body perceives, is the 'Subject', the substratum for all the experiences of the body, mind, and intellect. This principle that lends its light to every being is the divine principle OM, or Atma (the Self) residing inside the creature as microcosm as well as residing in the universe as macrocosm known as Brahm. 'The diversity in objects arises only when they are united in some way. Neither identity nor difference, neither existence nor non-existence of object is possible if they are not linked with one another. The ultimate view is that it is the 'one' which has all powers' (Vakyapadiya, 3/1/20-22). And that 'one' —whether perceived as the 'Naad' by a Yogi, or as 'OM' by an Upanishadic sage/seer, or known as 'Pranav' or as Brahm' by them — is the ultimate supreme consciousness which is the Soul of the cosmos, the energy that drives everything in this creation.

How and why OM helps one to have access to Brahm can be visualised by a practical and simple example from our day to day life. When one wishes to hear a particular radio station, he has to tune in to the right frequency by tweaking the knob on his radio receiver. The radio waves of all the broadcasting stations are omnipresent in the atmosphere and saturate it. When a person switches on the radio set, he hears so many of them, but he immediately neglects them and navigates through the dial to search for his favourite station. Similarly, in the case of Mantras too there are so many of them, and each relates to one aspect of Divinity personified as some God. But if one wishes to have access to the Supreme Being, the Mantra OM is meant for him. So it is only when the Atma focuses on OM that it can have access to the supreme Brahm. We cannot expect to hear station 'A' by tuning in to station 'B'.

This OM is regarded as the nearest analogue to the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, because sound, which is the fundamental form of OM, is also the nearest analogue of this Consciousness. This is because anything that has life in it is deemed to have consciousness, and life with its consciousness needs energy for its sustenance. This energy was generated in the cosmos by the primordial ethereal sound. This is because sound consists of waves, and movement of waves and their friction generate energy. Since this cosmic form of Consciousness is designated by the term Brahm in the Upanishads, it follows that OM is the nearest analogue for Brahm; OM is a synonym of Brahm; OM is a name given to the un-named and un-manifest form of the cosmic Consciousness.

The Upanishads are of the universal and uniform view that the entire creation, from the minuscule to the colossus, is a manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. Hence, if OM is regarded as a synonym of Brahm it naturally follows that this creation is a revelation of OM. The ancient sages deduced that it was the cosmic sound that provided the first spark of energy that set in motion the entire process of creation.

Plain saying that everything in existence is a revelation of Brahm was too abstract a proposition to be easily explained. So, ancient sages and seers devised the formula of OM to do so. It was easier to break the sound of OM into units to understand the complex phenomenon of creation in relation to Brahm just like a musician breaks the composite sound of music into independent notes, tones and meters for the purpose of understanding, teaching and learning the art and skill of music.

Thus, OM was divided into various parts based on the phonetic sound this word produced—such as the first part which sounded like the alphabet ‘A’, the second part as ‘O’, the third part as ‘U’, the fourth part as ‘M’, and so on. It is not that they had any independent existence, but it was just for the purpose of understanding and analysis. Since OM is the synonym of Brahm or its nearest analogue, it follows that Brahm also had these divisions, and by extensions to the whole living (existing) creation because the latter is a manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness.

From this evolved the concept of language. Each unit of OM had a specific sound form, a unique note, meter and tone, and this was given a name, called an ‘alphabet’. In other words, since OM was basically sound, they divided this sound into units of sound just like a musician who breaks music into its notes, meters and tones, and each such phonetic sound was then given a name which came to be known as an ‘alphabet’. [Refer Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Updesh/Canto 8, verse no. 5.]

But originally the alphabet was merely a ‘heard sound’ (a ‘Sruti’), but by and by when the need for written language was felt, a specific calligraphic or geometric design or pattern was assigned to a particular form or note of sound, and this became a standard of the written alphabet. From them were formed the words, and then the language.

Coming to our subject, the ancient sages and seers divided OM into various components for the purpose of study and explanation of the phenomenon of creation. Each unit (or note, meter and tone) of the cosmic all-pervading sound heard as OM was given a phonetic identity, such as the alphabets ‘A’, ‘U’, ‘O’ and ‘M’. These were then divided further into finer parts just as a scientist analyses an element by understanding its molecule, which is further sub-divided into atoms, and the latter once again into sub-atomic parts for further study. This helped to explain the phenomenon of this complex world of astounding variety—its various phases, such as its first coming into existence, then its development and growth, and finally its conclusion and dissolution. Not only this, they used OM to explain how it re-emerged once again in the next phase of creation and conclusion. OM was also used by them to explain the evolvement of language—and this was a natural corollary because OM itself consists of sound, and all languages are based on alphabets which are phonetic representations of the finer notes and tones of the universal sound element that were encrypted in the ethereal word OM.

It must be clearly noted that OM par-se is a monosyllabic sound that is immutable and one single whole just like Brahm that it represents. OM is like the distant sound of the rumble and thunder of cloud, the roar of the ocean, or the trundling sound of a speeding train that cannot be partitioned into separate sound forms, but for the purpose of study and analysis our ancient sages and seers, who had first heard OM in the form of the cosmic Naad during their meditative sessions, divided it into a number of finer notes just like a musician breaks up the sound called ‘music’ into notes, meters and tones. This helped them to analyse it and then elucidate and expound on a subject that was literally beyond explanation.

The main four components of the sound of OM, i.e. the letters A, O, U and M, were called the four Paads or aspects of OM, and since OM represented Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, it was deemed that they also stood for the four Paads of Brahm. These four letters or units or Paads could be further sub-divided into subtler and finer parts or units, giving a multiple dimensional and multi-layered form to Brahm, and the creation represented by Brahm. This is also the reason why we have so many countless tongues and languages—because the main four Paads of OM could be divided into a number of sub-divisions. These were called ‘Matraas’ or fractions, and the Narad Parivrajak Upanishad says, in its Canto 8, verse no. 3, that they total one hundred and twenty-eight in number. This is just an indicative figure to emphasise the countless possibilities that exist in which the single monosyllabic word OM can be divided into, and by extension Brahm and the creation too can be divided into for the purpose of study and analysis.

These concepts have been elaborately explained in Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Updesh/Canto 8, verse nos. 1-6 in detail.

Once again, since the individual creature’s Atma, which is his ‘true self’, is also pure consciousness and a microcosmic form of Brahm, it follows that OM is a bridge that establishes a direct link between the living being, the Jivatma, and Brahm, the Paramatma. [Refer Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Updesh/Canto 8, verse no. 7.]

The profound metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance of OM has been succinctly summarised, inter alia, in the following Upanishads. They are:—

(a) Rig Veda—Naad Bindu Upanishad.

(b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taaittiriya Upanishad, Valli (Canto) 1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 8; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 2, 4, 24-25, 31-32; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 2, 9-18 (which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation), 37, 102; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 136-139; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 2-12, 69-71 ½ which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11—1.34, and Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72; Shuk Rahashya Upanishad, verse no. 20 describes how OM is used for the purpose of ritualistic worship according to the Tantra philosophy involving Anga Nyas, Shadanga Nyas etc.; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-43 ½ describe how the three states of existence (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) and the three types of bodies (gross, subtle and causal) came into existence as manifestations of the three letters A, U and M of the word OM; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 38.

(b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Taarsar Upanishad, Canto 2, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-7; Hans Upanishad, verse nos. 16-20.

(c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad verse no. 74-81, 85-88; Pranavo Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM.

(d) Atharva Veda—Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-8; Prashna Upanishad, full Canto 5; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 2, section 2, verse no. 4,6; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 1, 8-12; Atharvashikha Upanishad; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 8; Canto 2, verse nos. 2, 5; Canto 4, verse no. 3;

Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-7; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 6, verse nos. 1-5; Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad, verse no. 6; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 4, 17 (which equates OM with the 'Hans' Mantra), 20 (which says that OM is used a Mantra to offer worship or reverence to the Atma); Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 3-5.

Now let us see some of the selected Upanishads and what they say on OM:--

Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 4, 17 (which equates OM with the 'Hans' Mantra), 20 (which says that OM is used a Mantra to offer worship or reverence to the Atma)—

“Canto 1, verse no. 17 = The Pranav or the Mantra known as ‘OM’ is the symbolic Brahm-Sutra (the secret formula which leads one directly to Brahm-realisation as it is a sound representative of the cosmic Consciousness) that is employed in doing the eclectic form of the fire sacrifice known as Brahm Yagya (which implies an internal form of fire sacrifice consisting of meditation and contemplation upon the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides inside one’s own inner-self as the Atma).

The subtle and sublime cosmic Consciousness that inspires the generation of the sound of OM, or which is at the heart of OM and forms its soul, is also known as Hans. Since OM refers to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm, the ‘Hans’ here refers to this ‘conscious’ factor which not only enables the generation of sound in the otherwise lifeless, pacific and inert cosmic ether, but also enables an equally lifeless, inert and gross body of the creature to actually hear sound. [Why does a dead body not hear anything? It is because the ‘Hans’ residing inside it has flown away; the ‘Atma’ or the ‘conscious soul’ has left it.]

Doing a Brahm Yagya in the proper method is a means of obtaining Moksha. [That is, meditating and contemplating upon Brahm with true wisdom and enlightenment, sans any pretensions and deceit, is the only way for attaining spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. It is the only way by which a creature can overcome the torments and tribulations associated with delusions. It is the only way by which he can break free from the cycle of birth and death to find eternal rest and peace. It is the only way by which he can find or discover the real and absolute ‘Truth’.] (17).

“Canto 1, verse no. 20 = The worship of ‘Hans’ (Brahm; Pranav; the Supreme Being; the cosmic Consciousness; the pure conscious Atma) is done three times a day, called the ‘Tri-Sandhya’. [This worship is called ‘Tri-Sandhya’ as it is done at three points of time in the day when one phase meets another. These are ‘dawn’ when the night meets the day, ‘noon’ when the morning meets the evening, and ‘dusk’ when the day meets the night.]

The three times symbolize the three Varnas (letters of the divine word OM standing for Brahm or Pranav). [The reference here is to the OM Mantra or the Pranav Mantra which is used to offer worship to the supreme transcendental Brahm three times of the day mentioned above. The word OM has three letters or syllables—‘A’ standing for initiation of creation symbolized by dawn, ‘O’ standing for development and growth of creation symbolized by the noon when the sun is at its best splendour and brilliance,

and ‘M’ standing for end or conclusion of creation symbolized by dusk when the day ends and the darkness of night overtakes.]

This worship is accomplished by symbolically invoking the blessings of the three types of the sacred Fire².

The Atma, the pure ‘self’ and the cosmic ‘consciousness’, is a personification of these three sacred Fires. The Atma has the same characteristic virtues as that of the fire element. [That is, the Atma has the same magnificence, glory, splendour, radiance, powers, potentials, holiness, divinity and purity as the ‘fire element’. Just like the ‘fire’ gives energy, light, warmth and dynamism to the entire creation, and it is impossible to imagine life and creation without it, it is equally impossible to imagine this creation without the Atma. In the cosmic perspective, this Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, it is Brahm that infuses life and vitality into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross creation.]

While offering obeisance and worship to this Atma, the worshipper employs the ‘OM’ Mantra which also consists of three letters or syllables, and has the same potentials and divine powers as the Atma that represents the fire element because OM stands for Brahm, the Supreme Being and the transcendental cosmic Consciousness.

By corollary therefore, both the Atma and OM refer to the same divine entity (Brahm, the true self) that is symbolized by the bird Hans (Swan).

Meditating and contemplating upon this Hans is known as the internal form of doing the fire sacrifice (20).”

OM, the word representing the cosmic sound known as Naad, is said to have ‘three Angas’, ‘three Shikhas’, and ‘three Matras’. Ref: Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 5. Let us see what they are—

“Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 5 = The Pranav or OM is said to have a subtle form which is said to have three ‘Angas’ (parts or units), three ‘Shikhas’ (peaks, tips, crests), and two or three ‘Matras’ (vowel sounds, aspects or dimensions)¹.

When OM becomes an inseparable part of the inner-self so much so that its repetition is done automatically with each breath without any special effort, then one becomes enlightened about the secret Atma or the pure consciousness that resides in his inner-self. This realisation also implies that the ascetic is able to see the same Atma everywhere outside in this world.

[This is primarily because OM is a cosmic sound that prevails everywhere in the space of the sky in the form of Naad. In the higher echelons of Yoga, the ascetic realises that OM and the cosmic Consciousness resonate with the same frequency. When he uses OM as a medium for meditation and contemplation, he experiences this cosmic vibration of Naad resonating inside his being. Obviously, when these two forms or aspects of vibrations—viz. the one resonating inside him in the subtle space of inner organs of the body, and the one resonating in the space of the sky outside him—coalesce with each other, they reach a climax, a crescendo, when the ascetic’s whole being gets submerged in the waves of ecstasy and thrill generated by the vibrations caused by the sound of the cosmic Naad reverberating throughout his inner being.] (5).

[Note—¹The three Angas of Pranav are the three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M.

The three Shikhas are the three phases of creation it represents—viz. the origin symbolized by the letter ‘A’, the expansion of creation till it reaches its zenith symbolized by the letter ‘U’, and the conclusion of creation symbolized by the letter ‘M’.

The three Shikhas may also imply the three primary phases of Yoga, especially Pranayam or breath control when the Mantra OM is usually employed, viz. the Purak or inhalation of breath, Kumbhak or holding the breath inside the body, and Rechak or exhalation.

The two or three Matras refer to the two basic states of existence of consciousness, viz. the waking state and the sleeping state. They can be further divided into three stages, viz. the Jagrat or the waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, and Sushupta or the deep sleep state.

The sound of OM has two or three Matras depending upon how closely one meditates upon it and hears it. Ordinarily it seems to have only two sound—viz. ‘O’ and ‘M’. But when analyzed closely it is discovered that it consists of three basic sounds which are equivalent to the alphabets ‘A’, ‘U’ and ‘M’.]”

Atharva Veda’s *Prashna Upanishad*, Canto 5 is entirely dedicated to the worship of OM, the divine Mantra-sound which is a representative of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divinity—

“Verse no. 1 = The next turn was of the son of Shibi, named Satyakam¹, to ask Pippalaad—‘Oh Lord! Please tell us which world is conquered or attained by a person who spends his lifetime repeating the divine Mantra OM which relates to the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, what is the destiny of the spiritually exalted person who worships the Supreme Being by constantly remembering him and continuously repeating the divine Mantra dedicated to the Lord of his life?] Please be kind enough to elucidate it and expound upon the subject’ (1).

[Note—¹A sage by the name of *Satyakam* appears in Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, section 4 wherein it is said that he was the son of a woman called Jabaalaa. This sage is also mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 6, and in Canto 6, Brahman 3, verse nos. 11-12. He was taught by the Fire God himself as described in Chandogya Upanishad, 4/4-4/9, and was regarded as an expert in the fire sacrifice—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 6/3/11-12. He had taught the enlightened king Janak as mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/1/6.

But it is not clear whether the sage mentioned in these two Upanishads is the same one as the Satyakam mentioned in our present Upanishad. Presently it is said that he was the son of Shibi and not Jabaalaa.]

“Verse no. 2 = Sage Pippalaad expounded as follows—‘Oh Satyakam! This OM is verily the transcendental Brahm and the Supreme Being manifested or personified in the form of the invisible and all-pervading cosmic sound. Therefore, a wise man who comes to understand the grand significance of OM is able to attain either one of these two divine destinations (as described below) (2).

[Note—The two aspects of sublime Divinity mentioned here have only subtle difference; they are the same entity but vary only in the degree of subtlety. While the first aspect refers to the primary Brahm which is the Absolute Truth and the ultimate Consciousness that is the cause and the end of the entire creation, its slightly less subtle form as the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation has come into being is the second form of this Brahm. It is like differentiating between the Pran, i.e. the chief vital wind called the breath, and the rest of its manifestations such as Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana or Udaana. Is it actually possible to demarcate different types of winds? The different names are assigned

to the same entity for the purpose of comprehension and to delineate the special functions it performs under different situations. Likewise, Brahm and the Viraat Purush are the two sides of the same divinity like we have the two sides of a coin. None is separated from the other. If this world is regarded as the revealed form of the Viraat Purush, then it is deemed to be a revelation of Brahm, because the Viraat Purush himself is a revealed form of Brahm at the cosmic level, though this form is invisible and indefinable like Brahm itself.]

“Verse no. 3 = If the aspirant meditates and contemplates upon only one Matra or aspect of OM, or worships OM with only one Matra, then he attains this world soon. This one Matra of OM is like the one Richa or hymn (of the Rig Veda, the ‘first’ of the Vedas).

Since he is worshipping a symbol of the supreme transcendental Brahm in this world (instead of other myriad symbols that only act as distracting factors in his spiritual progress and act as a drag on his Spirit) with devotion and faith, he is able to obtain the rewards of observing Brahmacharya (self control over the senses) and doing Tapa (observing austerity, doing penance and undergoing hardships for some noble cause). This establishes him in this world, and he acquires fame and respect in it. [This is because he is deemed to be wise and enlightened, and not deluded and perplexed by confounding interpretations and confusions created by dichotomies arising out of the numerous versions of the same Truth. He seems to be focused and determined; he gradually comes to terms with the reality, and is able to separate the grain from the chaff. It is much like the case of a student who becomes skilled in a subject by being steady under the guidance of one expert teacher rather than running from one teacher to another and not getting anywhere. Fickleness of mind and uncertainties of the heart are removed only when one is focused on his objective, and knows what that objective is. In other words, by worshipping only one symbol of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, he finds it easier to reach his spiritual goal.] (3).

[Note—The symbolism of worshipping only one Matra of OM and acquiring greatness in the world is to indicate the stupendous mystical powers of OM as a Mantra or a symbolic representation of Brahm. Though this person is not very enlightened and learned in the intricacies of metaphysics as he is only knowledgeable or aware of only one aspect or only one of the many virtues and glories of OM as a symbol of Brahm, but this is enough to give him great respect and glories amongst his peers. What if he had been enlightened about the principal whom this OM represents? He would have had a divine experience of the greatest sublimity and the highest order had he been acquainted with more divine aspects of Brahm, and with the Brahm itself!]

“Verse no. 4 = If the aspirant worships two Mantra or aspects of OM, i.e. he is more advanced in his knowledge and wisdom, then he is symbolically empowered by the Mantras of the Yajur Veda (the ‘second’ Veda) to attain the Som Loka in the Antariksha or the sky known as the heaven where the Gods who drink Som live. [The Som Loka is the realm of the heaven where the Moon God presides and where the Gods live. The Moon is the custodian of the elixir of astounding bliss and joy known as Som. That is why the Moon God is known as Som himself. The celestial moon is the pitcher where the Gods have stored this Som. During the formal fire sacrifice rituals, this liquid is drunk and offered to the sacred fire as oblations intended for acceptance by Gods. It is their food and invigorator. So, in essence, this verse means that those who worship OM with a better understanding of its metaphysical and spiritual importance obtain greater benefits.

They get spiritual bliss, happiness, joys and contentedness. They can literally taste the heavenly nectar of bliss here on earth. They get the same benefit as the one derived by remembering and chanting the holy Mantras of the Yajur Veda.]

Such people go to this Som Loka, enjoy its charms and benefits, and then come back to where they started from, i.e. they come back to the mortal life on earth (4).

[Note—This stage is a notch higher and better than the first stage narrated in verse no. 3 above. The aspirant has progressed in his spiritual pursuit and has tasted the nectar-like bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. He has moved a step closer to the Truth. The reference to the Yajur Veda is just for symbolic purposes and not to demean the importance of the Rig Veda mentioned in verse no. 3. It only marks the second milestone in a person's knowledge as now he is learned in two Vedas—the Rig/Rik and Yajur.]

“Verse no. 5 = When an aspirant worships and meditates upon three Matras or aspects of OM, he is able to access the abode of the Sun God which is splendorous and radiant. Just like a serpent comes out of its cuticle and finds freedom from its earlier grossness, such a wise aspirant is freed from all sins and their consequences. He attains the Brahm-Loka with the aid of the Sam Veda Mantras.

He enters the inner chamber where the supreme Brahm resides—i.e. he is able to witness the presence of Brahm in his own subtle heart as the pure consciousness or the Atma. [The reference to the Sam Veda is symbolic here because this Veda is very sweet to hear as it is sung most melodiously in a heart-warming manner, and not merely chanted in a staccato manner like the other Mantras or hymns of the other Vedas. Singing melodiously and soulfully requires the direct involvement of the heart, a metaphoric way of saying that the aspirant is talking directly to the Lord residing there in the core of his heart. He is not merely repeating some Mantra, but he is in direct communion with the Lord. Since Brahm is a splendorous and radiant divine entity, the Sun is always used as a metaphor for Brahm. Again, since Brahm is enlightenment and wisdom personified, or since these auspicious virtues are characteristics of Brahm, wherever they are found it is deemed that Brahm is also present. Since these grand virtues are like the ‘light’ that removes the darkness of ignorance, they are compared to the Sun which is the light of the world.]

These two verses (i.e. the current one and the one following next) are concerned with this eclectic concept as narrated herein above (5).

[Note—This verse marks the third milestone in his spiritual pursuit. He has risen a step higher than that achieved in verse nos. 3 and 4. Now he has seen the Atma first hand, and witnessed its radiance and splendour which matches that of the sun. It is so dazzlingly blind that the aspirant is just not able to actually see it but only experiences its presence indirectly in the reflected shine that is manifested in the form of enlightenment. Since the Sam Veda is sung melodiously rather than being simply chanted in a staccato manner, it implies that when the aspirant has witnessed the presence of Brahm more closely in his heart, and the latter's divinity has drenched him like rain from all sides, he experiences a surge of ecstasy that inspires him to sing merrily and soulfully. He has found extreme happiness and bliss that is un-inhibited and unbound, and this bursts out in the open when he begins to sing and dance in joy.]

“Verse no. 6 = The three components of OM (A, U and M) are inseparable and one, though they appear as independent units. [This is a very significant observation. It implies that though this creation appears to consist of countless independent units, but

since they all have one origin in Brahm and the same consciousness radiating and pulsating in their veins as the Atma, they are fundamentally and essentially the same, and are simply various manifestations of the immutable and indivisible One known as the non-dual Brahm. Incidentally, according to the metaphysical interpretation of OM, its three letters A, U and M symbolically represent the initiation, the development and growth, and the conclusion of creation respectively. It is like a circle having no definable end or beginning; it is simply a continuous process.]

Hypothetically, these three units of OM have independent existence and therefore subject to death or end or conclusion. [Theoretically, there is a point where the creation started and the initial process stopped. This is its hypothetical end. Then the second stage of development and growth occurred. This also has a certain point from where it began and a certain point where it reaches its outer limit. The end is this outer limit beyond which development and growth is not possible. Then comes the conclusion—it begins at the point where growth stops and decline begins. It ends when nothing remains. Thus, each unit of OM has a beginning and an end. But this is only for the purpose of analysis and understanding of something that is very esoteric and mysterious. But otherwise it is a seamless sound; it is a monosyllabic word like we have individual alphabets in a language.]

All these units are used in meditation and are such that they always complement and supplement each other. They cannot be counter-acting, they do not oppose each other, or one cannot subvert the rewards obtained by successful employment of the other.

A wise practitioner uses them in all forms of worship and meditation—whether it is done externally, internally or a combination of both. [The external form of worship takes many forms, such as formal fire sacrifices with OM as the Mantra; the internal form of worship is doing Japa with OM, and the performance of the fire sacrifice internally in a symbolic manner with the Pran as an offering, and a combination is the use of both the methods. In terms of Yoga, this would mean exercises using the body, such as various Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas (postures and control of the body) as being equivalent to external worship (because it involves the external organs of the body), contemplation and doing Pranayam (internal holding of breath) for prolonged periods with the OM Mantra as the internal form of worship (because it involves none of the external organs), and a combination of both as the middle path.]

Such an aspirant becomes steady and firm in his spiritual path. [Obviously, Yoga and other forms of spiritual practices teach discipline and self-restraint to the aspirant—so it is natural that he becomes steady and firm in his spiritual pursuit.] (6).

“Verse no. 7 = The aspirant obtains access to this mortal world with the Richas or hymns of the Rig/Rik Veda (because they are like one Matra of OM or one aspect of Brahm; refer verse no. 3), the Antarisksha or the world in the sky where the Gods live in the heaven with the help of the Richas of the Yajur Veda (because they are like two Matras of OM or two aspects of Brahm; refer verse no. 4), and the higher world called the Brahm-Loka with the aid of the Richas of the Sam Veda (as narrated in verse no. 5).

It is with the aid of the eclectic Mantra OM that the spiritual aspirant achieves success in obtaining the supreme destination where the supreme Brahm resides. With this success, he is able to enjoy peace and tranquility; he becomes eternal and imperishable; he becomes freed from the fear (of death and miseries). This exalted

existence is most sublime and divine in nature.’ [In other words, if one wishes to reach the pinnacle of spiritual awakening and Brahm as well as self realisation, he is required to use OM in a comprehensive manner, and not in a fractured manner. To draw an analogy, a man who eats all kinds of food, such as seasonal fruits, cereals, vegetables and dairy products, is able to get proper and balanced nourishment as opposed to a man who depends upon a limited variety of food either because of unavailability or due to his being a serf to his taste buds. Another example is of a student who studies different text books or reference books from a library to gain a comprehensive knowledge of his subject. By and by, he becomes an expert on this subject as compared to a student who has limited his study to just pass an examination.] (7).”

The *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-8 explains the concept of OM and its various divisions vis-à-vis Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness in fine detail and language as follows:--

“Verse no. 1 = The ethereal cosmic sound OM has four syllables or letters such as A etc. which symbolise the various aspects of this world such as its gross and other forms. The OM also has a fifth syllable called the ‘Ardha Matra’ or half-syllable which is a nasal sound. This latter Ardha Matra stands for the un-manifested, invisible and formless Pranav or Brahm. [This is because sound has no physical shape or form.] (1).

[Note—‘The word ‘Ardha’ means half, and ‘Matra’ means a part of the whole, a certain syllable in the language that is not complete in itself but is required to complete the meaning of other letters or words. From the metaphysical perspective the ‘Ardha Matra’ of OM represents that phase of creation that lies beyond its present conclusion and prior to the beginning of the new creation. It is a sort of bridge between the present gross creation and the subtle aspect of the creation.

When we analyse OM as is done in the forthcoming verses, we observe that it has many components—viz. the letters A, U and M, followed by the Ardha Matra and then by the Naad and Bindu as described in verse no. 2 below. Now, the clear form of the letters A, U and M represent the gross aspect of creation, the Naad and Bindu represent the higher subtle state, and the ‘Ardha Matra’ is the bridge or link between the two. The ‘Ardha Matra’ has a meaning only as long as there is a gross aspect and a subtle aspect of existence much like the case when a bridge has any importance only when there are two banks that have to be linked or required to be transited by a traveller.

As has been said in this verse, it represents the invisible or intangible aspect of Brahm as it represents a transitional aspect of Brahm—from the physical aspect of Brahm in this visible creation to the sublime Brahm in its cosmic form that has no physical forms; it indicates a transition from the gross to the subtle.

This basic and simple idea should be borne in mind while proceeding further with the discussion of OM.]

“Verse no. 2 = Now, the esoteric and secret aspects of OM are being described. This Pranav (the ethereal cosmic sound represented by the word OM) is Brahm. [In other words, OM is a sound manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.] This OM is the monosyllabic Mantra (a formula) for Brahm. Hence, OM, Brahm and Pranav are synonyms.

OM has been divided, for the purpose of study and analysis only, into eight components or aspects or sections. [Otherwise, it is an indivisible monosyllabic word.]

These eight parts are the letters A, U and M, the half-syllable called Ardha Matra, the Naad and Bindu (the crescent moon-shaped sign with a centrally-located dot dangling right over it at its focal point that is placed on the top of the visual depiction of OM), Kalaa (varying aspects or qualities or virtues of OM) and Shakti (dynamic energy that is latently present and inherent to the word OM).

[According to some versions, there are four letters constituting OM instead of only three—and they are A, O, U and M. In this version, the eight components would be these four letters + the Ardha Matra + the Naad (called the Kalaa) + Bindu (symbolising the Shakti) = 8.]

Further, each of the four letters and syllables (A, O, U and M; or A, U, M and the Ardha Matra) are divided into number of sub-divisions or parts. For instance, merely the letter A has ten thousand subtle forms or aspects or sub-divisions or parts, the letter U has one thousand subtle forms, and the letter M has one hundred subtle forms. Similarly, the Ardha Matra too has uncountable subtle aspects. [It is easy to understand this phenomenon. A motion picture consists of hundreds of thousands of still frames that pass before the eye in rapid succession, so quickly that they give an illusion of motion. Similarly, the monosyllabic OM also consists of millions of tiny bits of sound waves that coalesce with each other at the subtlest level so fast and rapidly that when is heard is one composite and seamless form of sound that is equivalent to the humming of the black bee. It is impossible to separate the individual units of sound that compositely form the word OM, but just for the plain purpose of analysis OM has been divided into distinct sounds as indicated by the letters mentioned herein above.]

Ancient sages and seers who could hear the cosmic sound during their meditative and contemplative sessions had such a razor sharp and sensitive mind that they could not only hear but also analyse the constituent parts of this sound just like we have spectrometers that analyse the constituent of rocks and chemicals based on the colours emitted by them, or the prism that can segregate the different constituent elements of white light into seven colours. Further, each sound was again sub-divided into smaller units just like we have red and infra red, or violet and ultra-violet colours of the spectrum, or such colours as orange which consists of a combination of red and yellow, green which is a combination of yellow and blue, violet which combines blue with red, and grey which results from a combination of white and black.]

The Viraat Pranav (i.e. the cosmic all-encompassing and all-pervading form of Brahm) is also called 'Sagun Brahm'. [The entire visible aspect of creation is a manifestation of Brahm that exists in its cosmic form known as Viraat. The Upanishads describe this Viraat as the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. When the entire creation is taken into consideration, this definition fits into place because everything that exists is one or the other form of the same cosmic form of Brahm. This can be easily understood by a simple example. Clay or earth is used by a potter to shape numerous pots and toys having uncountable varieties of shapes, forms and sizes. He may even colour them differently. But basically they are all clay or earth; it is the same clay or earth that has been used to mould them. Similarly, the entire creation has been moulded from the body of one Viraat. Since this world is visible, this form of Brahm is called 'Sagun'—one that is visible, has attributes and specific features and characters. The 'Sagun' (one with Guna) Brahm has 'Gunas' (certain virtues, attributes or qualities) that are discernible, tangible, quantifiable and definable.]

On the other hand, the Sanhaar Pranav is known as 'Nirguna Brahm'. [The Sanhaar form of Pranav refers to that aspect of Brahm which exists beyond the living world, that aspect of Brahm which is unknown and unseen, and which survives after the known world is concluded, eliminated or ceases to exist ('Sanhaar'). This aspect of Brahm which silently brings about the conclusion of creation and which proceeds death is invisible and imperceptible—hence, called Nirguna, one that has no known attributes and characters. When the creation concludes, no one knows what lies beyond. Hence, Brahm that exists beyond creation is 'unknown' and intangible. Hence, that aspect of Brahm which is concerned with the end of creation, or which is related to the conclusion of this existence, is the 'Nirguna' form of Brahm.]

Finally, the Sristhi Pranav is known by the combined form consisting of both the Saguna Brahm as well as the Nirguna Brahm. [The word 'Sristhi' refers to creation. This creation exists in two apparent forms—one that is visible or which is Saguna, and that is invisible or which is Nirguna. What we see and know is 'Saguna', and what we cannot know or see is 'Nirguna'.]

The Viraat Pranav is said to consist of all the four letters of OM such as A, O, U, M, and it is equivalent to the Samasthi aspect of Brahm. [This is because the Viraat stands for all the aspects of creation—viz. its creation is represented by the letter A, its development by the letter O, its expansion and growth by the letter U, and its conclusion by the letter M. This covers the entire gamut of visible creation, and hence it is called Samasthi—all-inclusive, all-encompassing, comprehensive, and the complete aspect of Brahm.]

The Sanhaar Pranav is represented by the Ardha Matra, and is equivalent to the 'Vyasthi' aspect of Brahm. [As has been explained in a note of verse no. 1 above, the Ardha Matra stands for the conclusion or termination of the sound of OM just like the word Sanhaar which also means conclusion or end of creation. Hence, both are synonymous with each other. When individual units of creation end, they all collapse into one single mass to become indistinguishable from each other; they become homogenous in nature and texture. Since they all become one and inseparable from one another once the visible creation ends—removing distinctions and specialised features that mark the individuality of each gross visible entity of creation till it existed—so when we deal with that aspect of creation that is related to its post conclusion phase we deal with one single mass, and therefore it is 'Vyasthi'. The word 'Vyasthi' means to treat an entity as a single unit instead of taking its myriad and distinctive forms into consideration. In the context of OM it would mean the stretched or prolonged sound that follows the end of the pronunciation of 'OM' which cannot be sub-divided like the earlier sound of OM which was divided into the three letters, viz. A, U and M.

In the context of Brahm, the word 'Vyasthi' refers to the only one single non-dual form of cosmic Consciousness that exists after the visible and known—or Saguna—creation, represented by the articulately spoken letters of OM, comes to a conclusion. It is called Vyasthi because it is single, one and isolated. This form of Brahm has no duality in it in as much as it is un-formed and without any attributes. This Vyasthi form of Brahm has no myriad forms or characters; it is like a calm sky that is immutable, uniform, all-encompassing, all-pervading, and aloof from all dichotomies and schisms.] (2).

“Verse no. 3 = The Viraat Pranav (i.e. the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that personifies the sum total of all the gross bodies of this creation) consists of, or is endowed with, all the sixteen Matras¹. [The sixteen Matras are enumerated below. In the context of the sound of OM, the sixteen Matras refer to the different vowel and basic consonant sounds of the Sanskrit language.]

This Viraat Pranav is said to transcend and go beyond the thirty-six Tattvas of creation².

The letter ‘A’ is the first Matra of OM, ‘U’ is the second Matra, ‘M’ is the third Matra, the ‘Ardha Matra’, or the half-syllable represented by the long-drawn humming sound made at the end of OM when the mouth closes, is the fourth Matra, the ‘Naad’ (the crescent-shaped moon placed on the top of the symbol of OM) is the fifth Matra, the ‘Bindu’ (the dot placed on the top of the Naad at its focal point) is the sixth Matra, the Kalaa (the various aspects of OM or Brahm) is its seventh Matra, the Kalatit (the transcendental aspect of OM or Brahm) is its eighth Matra, the virtue of Shanti (peace and tranquillity) is its ninth Matra, the Shantitya (the state that goes beyond ordinary peace; the transcendental state of blissfulness) is its tenth Matra, the Unmani (a state of mental non-attachment, detachment, non-involvement and renunciation) is its eleventh Matra, the Manomani (the higher state of Unmani when the sub-conscious too becomes defunct) is its twelfth Matra, the Puri or Vaikhari (i.e. the transcendental state reached by a hermit in the higher stages of spiritual progress; the state when the reverberations of OM are clearly heard as a resonance that submerges the aspirant and when he can distinguish between its various shades of sound—represented by its initial letter ‘A’) is its thirteenth Matra, the Madhyama (the median or middle stage of the sound of OM—represented by its letter ‘U’) is its fourteenth Matra, the Pashyanti (the stage of Naad or the sound of OM when it rises from the Mooladhar Chakra located at the lower end of the body and enters the heart—represented by its letter ‘M’) is its fifteenth Matra, and the Para (the transcendental state when the resonance of OM is heard in the head—represented by its half-syllable called the Ardha Matra) is its sixteenth Matra.

The Pranav Brahm, or the supreme transcendental Consciousness that exists in the form of the ethereal sound OM and its awareness, having the above described sixteen Matras or aspects is distinct and beyond the purview of the Turiyatit state of existence. [That is, to say that Brahm is definable or understandable even by the transcendental state of consciousness known as Turiyateet is a grave mistake.]

The Turiyatit state of existence has four divisions or aspects—viz. Ot, Anugyat, Anugya and Avikalp. [The word ‘Ot’ means comfort, peace, bliss as well as little, frugal; the word ‘Anugyat’ means one that is known by mandate, by the command or orders given by the scriptures; the word ‘Anugya’ means command, order, mandate, permission; and the word ‘Avikalp’ means that which is certain, is doubtless, that which has no alternatives or choices. Hence, Turiyatit state of existence refers to that state in which one can obtain certain bliss that comes with realising one’s true divine nature and form as conscious Atma as narrated or taught by the scriptures. In the context of what is said here, refer also to verse no. 20 of Canto 8 of this Upanishad.]

Now since Brahm having sixteen Matras or Kalaas pervades in all these four states or divisions of Turiyatit, it follows that the total number of Matras or Kalaas of Brahm are sixty-four in all. [The 16 Matras or Kalaas of Brahm as described in stanza 1

and 3 of this verse multiplied by the 4 aspects of Turiyatit as described above = $16 \times 4 = 64$.]

Again, the Pranav Brahm (i.e. the attribute-less and formless cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) is revealed in two forms—viz. the Purush (the primordial Male) and Prakriti (the primordial Nature). Since Pranav Brahm in its primary form is said to have sixty-four Kalaas or Matras (as discussed above), we conclude that the total number of Matras or Kalaas of Brahm would be one hundred and twenty-eight. [$64 \times 2 = 128$.] Thus, Brahm is said to have one hundred and twenty-eight Matras or Kalaas.

Thus we conclude that the same sublime Brahm, inspite of being one, immutable, indivisible and non-dual, appears to have so many varied forms, depicting so many varied characteristics, attributes and properties, and seemingly having so many existences, all of them depending upon how and from which angle one looks at this divine non-dual entity. This is also the reason why the same Brahm has two basic forms of existence—one is the Saguna or the form which has specific attributes and is visible, and the other is Nirguna or the form which has no attributes and which is invisible (3).

[Note—¹The word Matra literally means amount, volume, quantity, magnitude, ingredient, part, section, aspect, facet or dimension of anything. The creation has been divided into sixteen parts or sections. These are also called the sixteen Kalaas of creation. Since Brahm is the sum total of creation, the former is also said to have sixteen Kalaas. The word 'Kalaa' literally refers to the special qualities, attributes, virtues, strengths, powers and potentials possessed by an entity. Its other connotations include—(a) shape, form, contours of a thing; (b) special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one possesses; the shades or aspects of one's overall personality; (c) a division, portion, fraction, phase or degree of anything.

The word Pranav is a synonym for the cosmic sound known as Naad which is the reverberating sound in the cosmic ether that fills the space of the sky. This Naad is regarded as being the closest analogue of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. This sound is homogenous and all-pervading. It is from this Naad that the first signs of life in the form of sound waves having energy were generated. It is from this Naad that all forms of sounds, having all shades of notes, meters and tunes were created. These primary forms of sound evolved into different phonetic alphabets of so many different languages and spoken tongue which all have the same set of primary sounds as their base. The language may be intelligible or not, such as those spoken by the modern man and those spoken by the primitive man and the animals respectively, but all of them have one common denominator—and it is the basic sound of OM or Naad having the sixteen Matras as enumerated in this Upanishad. It's almost like music that is played by so many instruments—though each instrument appears to produce different type of sound but basically all of these genres of instruments have one single language, and it is the language of 'music'.

The word 'Matra' also refers to the vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language. Since the entire gamut of creation is said to have its origin in the cosmic vibration that was generated in ether at the initial stage of creation, and these vibrations created sound, it follows that Brahm which symbolically stands for this entire creation would naturally consist of the entire spectrum of sound as represented by the sixteen sounds of the Sanskrit vowels.

In the context of OM, which is the cosmic ethereal sound of space, it refers to the different shades, hues, tones and aspects in which OM is known to exist. In essence it means that the macrocosmic form of Brahm that is also known as the 'Viraat Purush'

encompasses all shades of knowledge encrypted in words that are formed out of the basic sound of creation, called the various Matras of OM.

²The thirty-six Tattvas of creation— The word Tattvas literally means the essence, the reality, the true state and the basic principle of anything. It also implies the principal elements of creation. The Tattvas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide its exterior façade and interior character. We have primary elements that were formed at the time of creation, and the secondary elements that developed later on as the creation evolved, and finally there were the tertiary elements which were the offshoots to the process of creation when the complexities of the latter increased.

A word may have different connotations according to the context in which it is used. For example, we speak of a flower's Tattva, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the 'essence' of the flower. Even the nectar is called 'essence' or Tattva of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their Tattva or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the 'liquid or fluid' nature of the Tattva. It is this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the 'essence' or Tattva that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was 'ethereal', more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though 'air' does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a 'volatile essence' drawn from flowers. It is 'volatile' because it is never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that Tattva been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendourous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the

deity whose Mantra it is, and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Primarily there were five basic elements or Tattvas of creation—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements—they are the various Tattvas of creation. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. Finally came the tertiary elements—they are the various Anatahakaras, the various Vikaars and Vrittis, the three Gunas etc. that would form the third layer of elements or Tattvas of creation.

These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma which in association of different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different nature, temperaments, character and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements but releasing energy or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. The Atma would be more like the atom of the carbon atom which is at the heart of all organic compounds.

The thirty-six Tattvas are the following—the 25 Tattvas as described in Shankhya philosophy^{1*} + 1 Iswar (of Patanjali's Yoga Darshan) + the 8 Vikaars or faults^{2*} + 1 Vyakta (that which is visible and has attributes, i.e. the Sanguna aspect of Viraat Pranav or Brahm) + 1 Avyakta (that which is not visible, not having any attributes and characteristics, i.e. the Nirguna aspect of the Viraat Pranav or Brahm) = total 36 Tattvas. {^{1*}The 25 Tattvas according to the Sankhya philosophy are the following—Purush (the primary Male), Prakrit (Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25. ^{2*}The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature.}}

“Verse no. 4 = [The ethereal sound OM, also known as Pranav, is said to be the manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading and is the cause of this creation as well as its conclusion. Now, an attempt is being made to outline the

main sublime qualities or virtues of this cosmic Brahm. Those qualities or virtues are not exhaustive but only indicative.]

The supreme cosmic Divinity known as Brahm is the supporting foundation and cause of everything in existence. It is self-illuminated and gloriously brilliant. It is the Lord of all the living beings, and is all-pervading and omnipresent.

Brahm is honoured by the title of ‘Vibhu’—one who is almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, majestic and powerful Lord of all.

All the Gods are nothing but various manifestations of this Brahm to carry out different functions of creation.

The cosmic crucible called Prakriti or Nature in which the entire world characterised by the preponderance of delusions and falsehoods, a world infused and suffused wholly in illusions, deceit and confusions collectively called ‘Maya’, was conceived, is also present in or included as a part of the bowls of this Brahm that is infinite and fathomless (4).

“Verse no. 5 = The sound manifestation of Brahm, i.e. OM representing the conscious living world that speaks (the ability to speak is an irrefutable and incontrovertible sign of life and consciousness because dead entities do not speak or hear), is revealed in the form of all the letters of the (Sanskrit) language. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that all knowledge is Brahm personified, because knowledge is encrypted in words and it is disseminated through the use of words, and words are based on alphabets which are simply symbol or sign representation of the phonetic sound.]

Brahm personifies the element of Kaal or the eternal factor of ‘time’. [The concept of ‘Kaal’ is a vast, all-inclusive concept even as ‘time’ is an eternal factor that surrounds the entire existence from the outside. Nothing exists beyond the boundary of ‘time’ or Kaal; nothing remains immune to the effects of ‘time’ or Kaal. That is why we say that one is facing ‘bad or good’ time when things do not remain under one’s control. This is because ‘time’ has an overriding and overruling authority over all the activities of the creature in this world. The ‘time’ would outlive this creation and would be there even before the next generation of creation comes into being. It is in the bowls of ‘time’ that the creation exists, it is in the fathomless bowls of ‘time’ that it would vanish when its time is due and up, and it is from this bowl of ‘time’ that it would again emerge when the time comes for its revival. Hence, ‘Kaal’ is treated as being equivalent to Brahm—it both precedes and follows creation.]

Brahm is an embodiment of all forms of speech or words. [That is, all the languages on this planet—mere sounds as made by animals, or the phonetic language as used by the human race—are revelations of the stupendous dynamic ability of Brahm to express himself.]

Brahm is Shiva personified. [That is, Brahm is an embodiment of the grand virtues of auspiciousness, holiness, purity, divinity and truth—virtues that Shiva personifies. These auspicious virtues of Brahm are also known as the ‘Shiva principle’.]

One must research and attempt to learn the truth about this Brahm when one studies the scriptures, as the latter unanimously proclaim the supremacy and truthfulness of this single entity that is the subject matter of all forms of knowledge. In fact, this Brahm is what all the Upanishads talk and preach about (5).

“Verse no. 6 = This Brahm encompasses all dimensions of time. It is the past, the present and the future, and the world that exists in all these three spheres of time.

Brahm is that eternal, immaculate and imperishable Absolute Truth that exists beyond all known manifestations of creation called the three Bhuvans or worlds. [The three Bhuvans are the terrestrial world, the heavenly world, and the nether world. Brahm literally surrounds these three worlds like a moat surrounds a fort. It is like the citadel of creation where the supreme Emperor lives.]

This Brahm, in its cosmic manifestation that has no attributes and which is eternal and all-pervading, is in the form of the ethereal sound represented by the word OM. Those who are wise and knowledgeable say that this OM is the vehicle or medium that provides the creature with Moksha (emancipation and salvation). That is, when a wise spiritual aspirant comes to realise the truth of Brahm and the significance of OM, he uses the latter as an easy and specific tool to come in direct contact with the Principal (Brahm) that this word (OM) represents (6).

“Verse no. 7 = The eternal and imperishable Brahm which is implied by the word OM is the divine, sublime entity that is also known as the Atma. [The Atma is the creature’s own ‘self’ which is pure consciousness that resides in his body, in the subtle heart.]

Hence, a wise and erudite aspirant should establish a clear and direct link between his Atma and Brahm through the medium of OM. Since OM represents Brahm, and since Atma is also a representative of Brahm, it follows that by meditating upon OM the spiritual aspirant’s Atma—which is his true self—is able to establish a direct link with Brahm who is eternal and imperishable as well as the only Truth in creation¹.

With this eclectic view, the aspirant is able to obtain access to Amrit, the elixir of bliss and eternity.

He becomes eternal in the sense that he realises that his ‘true self’ known as the Atma is a personification of Brahm, and hence it has the unique virtues of Brahm which include being eternal, infinite and imperishable (7).

[Note—¹Herein lie the importance of using OM as a Mantra to realise Brahm and be enlightened about one’s true ‘self’. It is well established that OM is a sound and verbal representation of Brahm, and that the Atma is a subtle image of the same Brahm. So, when the aspirant meditates using OM as a medium, he is able to establish a direct union between his Atma and Brahm. In effect, OM is the bridge that links the two banks of the river—one bank is the Atma and the other is Brahm. Say, what difference is there between the two banks of even an ordinary river on earth, except that the one where the traveller stands is known as ‘this bank’, and the one where he intends to go as ‘that bank’? Other than that, the two banks are the same; as far as the river is concerned both its banks are the same. They have the same water of the same river touching their sides. The two sides represent the same earth that is separated by the same river. A bridge across this river makes it easier for the traveller to go from either side to the other just as if he was walking on solid ground instead of having to cross the formidable barrier of liquid water on which it is impossible for any man to walk on foot.

Let us take another example to understand the relation between OM and the spiritual aspirant. Suppose a man is trapped in a dungeon or a prison that is surrounded by a moat. This moat stands as a formidable barrier between his life of imprisonment and his freedom because even if he is freed from the walls of the dungeon he would not be able to go on the other side to enjoy his newly found freedom. Now say, how would he cross

the moat to his freedom? Of course, the options open to him for the purpose of crossing the moat are the following—he can either swim across it, or take a boat, or just walk across a bridge on the moat. Obviously, the last choice is hassle free and the easiest way to freedom. So, if one were to treat this gross world as the prison for the soul, the easiest way for him to reach the goal of spiritual liberation and deliverance is to take the aid of OM as this is not only the simplest of Mantras but also the nearest analogue of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness which is like the vast stretch of green land which his Atma, the microcosmic form of the same consciousness that resides in the individual's own gross body as his soul, as his Spirit, wishes to reach after a stifling lifetime living inside the body of the creature. This would be the Atma's liberation just like a prisoner breathing fresh air after spending a lifetime in the dark recesses of a dungeon when he would run hither and thither on the meadow across the moat in extreme ecstasy at finally being able to leave behind the horrific time spent within the confines of the walls of the prison.

In the present context of this Upanishad's teaching, this spiritual 'bridge' is OM. It establishes a permanent link between the Atma and Brahm. The river can be compared to the formidable world which has to be crossed by the spiritual aspirant who wants his Moksha or final emancipation and salvation, or one who wishes Mukti or liberation and deliverance for his trapped soul. Just like a bridge is the most comfortable method to reach the other side of the river, the ethereal Mantra OM is the easiest and the surest medium by which the creature can reach his spiritual goal of realising Brahm.]”

“Verse no. 8 = With this sublime and holistic view of creation along with the realisation that everything is Brahm personified, or that Brahm embodies the entire creation in its universal cosmic form, he must understand that the same Brahm has a gross body that is visible as well as a subtle body that is not visible.

Similarly, he must be firmly established in the eclectic view that the Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm are one and the same (8).”

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Aharva Veda tradition describes in its Canto 1, section 6, verse nos. 3-4 how the three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M, are visualized in different forms when an ascetic does Pranayam (breath control during Yoga or meditation) and focuses his attention on the subtle aspects of OM. Let us quote this Upanishad and see what it has to say—“The practitioner should sit in the Padmasan or any other Aasan (described in Canto 1, section 3) convenient to him and meditate, or focus the attention of his mind, as follows—There is divine goddess known as Gayatri who has a divine presence at the tip of the nose. She is surrounded by a halo of silvery white radiance that resembles the brilliance of moonlight. Her countenance is reddish in hue. She is sitting on a divine Swan. She holds a Danda (a scepter or small baton indicating her authority and power) in her hand. She is of a young age, and is an image that represents the first letter ‘A’ of the divine and ethereal Mantra OM. [The goddess referred here represents Brahma the creator. She is the female manifestation of Brahma and represents his Shakti or divine cosmic powers to create. The letter ‘A’ of the word OM also symbolizes the initial phases of creation. The colour red or copper-colour represents the Raja Guna, the second of the three primary qualities in this world, and it creates a tendency for creation and production. That is why the colour of the blood is red.]

The second letter ‘U’ of this Mantra OM is manifested in the form of the goddess known as Savitri; she represents the second phase of OM. She has an auspicious body that has a white or fair countenance. She is also of a young age and sits atop the

legendary bird known as Garud. [Garud is the heron or eagle who is regarded as the vehicle or mount of Lord Vishnu.] She holds a Chakra in her hand. [The Chakra is a serrated discus held by Vishnu and is his weapon. Hence, this goddess is deemed to be a female manifestation of Vishnu; she represents the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being to sustain and protect what has been created. The colour white represents the Sata Guna, the best of the three primary qualities in this world, and it creates a tendency for sustenance, development and protection.]

Finally, the last letter of the Mantra OM, which is ‘M’, has assumed an image of a goddess known as Saraswati; she represents the final phase of OM. She has a dark countenance, rides a bull, is aged, and holds a trident in her hand. [Obviously, she represents Lord Shiva, the God who is assigned the task of bringing the creation to a conclusion. This is clearly evident in the fact of her holding a trident. The colour dark or black represents the Tama Guna, the lowest of the three primary qualities in this world which creates destruction and ruin.] [3.]

So we see that the three letters A, U and M constitute the divine and ethereal Mantra OM, and their symbolic representations in the form of the three goddesses encompass the entire creation because they represent the three phases of creation—origin, development and conclusion respectively.

Though the word OM has been hypothetically divided into three letters but when said or pronounced it is deemed to be a monosyllable and pronounced as one single uninterrupted primordial sound ‘OM’. Hence, OM is known as the ‘Ekaskshar’—literally meaning ‘one letter’. [It is like the rumble of the cloud’s thunder—it is an unbroken sound that arises in the vast bowls of the sky, spread out, and gradually subsides to finally vanish into the bowls of the sky. No one can describe this sound except in general terms, and no one can segregate it into compartments.]

In a similar manner, the single source of this entire creation is also an entity that is one non-dual and universal, but which is visualized as having various phases or dimensions. This cosmic and universal divinity which is represented by the Mantra OM is also known as the ‘Ekaskshar’—literally meaning here ‘one that is imperishable; an entity that is one, non-dual, immutable, indivisible, eternal, infinite and imperishable’. It is in the form of a supreme source of ‘light’ that is self-illuminated and universally present. [4.] (3-4).”

There is a very interesting narration in the Atharva Veda’s *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 5-8 that describes the four states of existence of consciousness—known as the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, and the Turiya or the post-Sushupta or the transcendental state—as corresponding to the four Paads or limbs or aspects of Brahm, the supreme transcendental divine Being. These four Paads also correspond to the four subtle sounds of the ethereal word OM. These sounds correspond to the four letters A, O, U and M that together constitute OM. Since the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ of the Jiva, the living being, is a microcosmic form of the Supreme Being, and since everything in creation is a manifestation of Brahm and nothing else, this Upanishad then goes on to explain how the four states of existence in this creation correspond to these four letters of OM as well as to the four Paads of Brahm.

This Upanishad says that to understand OM and Brahm in a holistic way, all these aspects as outlined above have to be understood in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and not in a fractured manner. It is important to note here that OM is a monosyllabic sound, like a continuous rumble of distant thunder or the trundling sound of a running train, or the continuous notes played on the harmonium. But even as a musician knows the finer notes and tones being played on the harmonium although the general sound produced by the instrument appear to be one continuous stream of music, those sages and seers of the past who were highly realised and expert in meditation and contemplation could discern the finer sound components of the otherwise uniform sound of the ethereal word OM that has its genesis in the vibrations produced in the cosmic ether signaling the presence of energy and dynamism in a most subtle and sublime form in the background of creation. This they named Pranav or the cosmic vibration of life that generated the energy that drives the dynamo of life in this creation. This was also called the cosmic Consciousness because it was able to inject vibrancy, dynamism and life into the otherwise inane and lifeless primary ingredients of creation.

The four components of OM were envisioned as the four phonetic sounds of the Sanskrit language corresponding to the alphabets A, O, U and M of the English language. Since everything in this creation is a revelation of one Brahm, it follows that the entire creation represents these four components of OM, and that the entire creation also represents the four Paads of Brahm.

Further, the Consciousness is regarded as having four primary states of existence—viz. the Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, Sushupta or deep sleep, and Turiya or transcendental state beyond the Sushupta. Therefore, these four letter-components of OM as well as the four Paads of Brahm are represented by these four states of existence of Consciousness.

These are the basic points that are being elucidated and expounded upon in the following verses of this Canto.

Now, let us quote this great Upanishad—

“Verse no. 5 = The cosmic, divine, sublime and ethereal monosyllabic word OM is known as ‘Akshar’ as it is imperishable and immortal. [The Sanskrit word ‘Akshar’ has two meanings—one is a ‘letter’ and the other is something that ‘does not decay, is imperishable and eternal’. OM is likened to a ‘letter’ because it is a monosyllabic sound. For the purpose of study and analysis of its magnificent divine aspects it is hypothetically split into three (A, U, M), four (A, O, U, M) and even six (A, O, U, M, Chandra Bindu and Ardha Maatra) components. It ought to be remembered that OM is not an ordinary monosyllable, but it is the Beej Mantra for the supreme transcendental Authority of creation and the cosmic Consciousness known as ‘Brahm’ that is at the root of everything that exists. This ‘cosmic Consciousness’ is known as Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the Brahm, the Supreme Being, at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma, the individual soul of the creature known as the Jiva, the living being, at the microcosmic level of creation.]

The entire visible world is but a manifestation/revelation of OM. In other words, the world is a visible form of the various aspects of OM (and since OM is the Beej Mantra for Brahm, this world is a visible manifestation of the latter). The visible physical world establishes and makes evident or visible the magnificent and stupendous glory of

that invisible supreme Authority of creation known as the sublime Consciousness or the divine Brahm that is represented by the ethereal sound of OM.

Whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall ever exist in the future, as well as any other dimension or aspect of time and space which is beyond these three, are also nothing else but a manifestation or an extension of OM as a representative of Brahm. It is all-inclusive and comprehensive in nature.

Surely, everything is Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm, and nothing else. Therefore, it is also OM in a visible and manifested form. [Since everything is a manifestation of Brahm, and OM is a word used to indicate Brahm as it is a Beej Mantra of Brahm, it follows that the entire creation is a symbol of OM in its physical form. This eclectic world view of creation creates a high level of equanimity of thought, and establishes uniformity and universality in this creation. It removes all causes or basis of dichotomies, schisms, frictions, ill-will and jealousy, thereby instilling harmony and calmness in the entire creation just like the case of the word OM which is treated as a monosyllabic sound though it has four sound components that are perfectly integrated in its sound structure.

Hence, though we assign different names and categories to different units of creation for the purpose of dealing with them in day-to-day life, it will be wise and enlightened to regard them as an integral and an inseparable part of one wholesome cosmic entity for all practical purposes.

As has been said above, OM is the Beej Mantra of Brahm. Brahm is known and recognized by this word OM. They are synonymous with each other. If this world is a visible manifestation of Brahm and an extension of its glory, it follows that the world is actually a manifestation and an extension of OM and its glory. Again, since Brahm is pure Consciousness, it follows that what is basic to this world is 'consciousness' and nothing else. In other words, if 'Brahm' and 'supreme Consciousness' are removed from this world, nothing of any worth remains in it. Hence, Brahm or cosmic Consciousness is the 'Tattwa' of creation; it is the essential and basis unit of creation around which the rest of the edifice of creation is moulded.

OM has four basic sounds—viz. the sound of the letter 'A' (as in son) which represents the first aspect of Brahm symbolizing the initiation of creation, 'Oo or U' (like the letter 'O' in the word go) stands for the second aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the development, expansion and growth of the world, 'M' (as in mum) stands for the third aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the conclusion of the world, and finally the prolonged nasal sound of 'M' that is made after OM has been pronounced completely and the mouth closed stands for the fourth aspect of Brahm, and it corresponds to the time between the last creation and the beginning of a new phase. Hence, it naturally follows that the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the four subtle and most esoteric aspects of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm that is envisioned in the form of a sound equivalent to that made by saying the monosyllabic word 'OM'. This is why OM is regarded as the Beej Mantra for Brahm just like we have the monosyllabic word 'Raam/Raan(g)' as the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram because the Lord's name 'Ram' is based on a single Sanskrit letter 'Ra' as in the word run.

The four letters of OM, i.e. A, O, U and M, exist only in a hypothetical plane and are employed for the express purpose of analysis and study. It must be remembered that OM is a monosyllabic sound that is one, continuous, and unbroken sound. These letters

have been imagined just for the purpose of understand OM. This instance is cited to explain how the entire creation and the four states of existence of consciousness are indistinguishable from one another when we consider the entire creation in a holistic and wholesome manner. Similarly, this also explains how Brahm is one single indivisible and immutable whole though it has been said to have four Paads in the present Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads.]

The world is a visible and gross manifestation of what is essentially invisible, sublime, subtle and supreme entity—i.e. the visible gross physical world is a manifestation of Brahm who is invisible, subtle, sublime and supreme. The visible and verifiable world proves that there is something beyond the spectrum of visibility that is real and truthful, and of which it is an image. That essential element which forms the ‘soul’ and the ‘basic identity’ of the world is called its ‘Atma’. Since it is Brahm that is at the core of all aspects of creation, it follows that Brahm is also the ‘Atma or soul’ or ‘essence and fundamental aspect’ of creation, or the ‘Tattwa’ of creation—both at the macrocosmic level of creation, in which case it is called the ‘Paramatma’ (the supreme and transcendental Atma), as well as at the microcosmic level of creation, in which case it is simply called the Atma of the individual creature.

This Atma or Parmatma has four Paads or limbs or aspects corresponding to the four Paads of Brahm represented by the four sounds of OM. Again, since the Atma is nothing but pure consciousness, it follows that the four Paads of the Atma or Brahm represent the four states of existence of the ‘Consciousness’.

[Although the supreme Brahm is indivisible, immutable and eternal, and it cannot be fractioned or partitioned, we hypothetically divide its entire being into four stages or states of existence just in order to understand or grasp its full form or nature like the monosyllabic sound OM that has been split into four components just for the purpose of study and analysis. That is, this division is done to facilitate study and comprehension of an entity that is usually beyond the reach of the mind and the senses.

The universal sound OM is split into four components A, O, U and M. These are regarded as being representatives of the four aspects of creation—viz. the origin, the development, the expansion and growth, and the conclusion respectively. They also respectively represent the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, Sushupta or deep sleep state, and Turiya or post-Sushupta state. This latter concept is explained below.]

The supreme transcendental Atma or the cosmic Consciousness, also known as ‘Brahm’ and represented by the word OM, has so-called four states of existence—viz. (a) The waking state of consciousness called ‘Jagrat’ (or Vishwa), (b) the dream state of consciousness called ‘Swapna’ (or Taijasa), (c) the deep sleep state of consciousness called ‘Pragna’, and (d) the ‘Turiya’ state of consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme blissful state of consciousness called ‘pure Brahm’, and which is beyond the earlier three states of existence of consciousness.

To begin with, the 1st state of consciousness, called the ‘First Paad’ or the first leg of the conscious Atma, is being described here in this verse as follows—

During the waking state of consciousness, the entire manifest gross world is the Atma’s play-ground. The consciousness is spread in all the directions of the gross world because during this waking state of its existence it is aware of the entire length and breath of this world and all its happenings. Since this world is gross, the Atma during this

waking state also becomes gross in nature because of its association with this gross world. The Atma assumes the basic gross character of this world as it is invariably influenced by the gross nature of its surrounding habitat with which it has to keep constant contact. During the Jagrat state, the Atma of the creature interacts with the physical gross world in which the creature lives. The Atma keeps company with the material sense objects of this world through the sense organs of the body of the creature. This contact is bound to have its influence upon the Atma, and since the world is gross and artificial, since it is dominated by the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) in varying proportions, as well as by Maya (delusions) along with its own array of problems, it follows that this influence is not positive at all, it is not conducive to the Atma's welfare and peace. Such is the influence of the Jagrat state that the Atma becomes restless and agitated; it forgets that its primary nature is one of being eternally peaceful and rested. In brief, the Atma acquires some degree of grossness and a tainted character so typical of this world.

From another angle this concept can be understood as follows—the conscious Atma, which essentially has no form and attributes, manifests its self in the form of the visible world, and resides in all the forms that this world takes. This is because Atma and Brahm are synonymous, and it is Brahm that is revealed in the form of the world. That is, all the living creatures of the world have the same Atma or pure consciousness in them. In other words, the Atma assumes the gross body of all the living beings, and it is with these bodies that the Atma of the individual interacts with the world of material sense objects. The Atma becomes aware of the presence of the various sense objects of the world by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body. These organs help the Atma to perceive the world and respond to it. That is why they are called organs of perception and organs of action of the Atma. The Atma is linked to the world through the sense organs that collectively make up the gross body of the creature.

Hence, during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness, the Atma has spread its tentacles in the external material world and its sense objects which are primarily gross in nature. It lives in this world just like it lives inside the body of the individual creature. Therefore, the gross world becomes its de-facto body while the Atma exists in the Jagrat (waking) state. It begins to identify its self with the gross body (and forgets that it is most sublime and subtle in nature, and is the invisible consciousness that has no form). During the Jagrat state, the Atma is not only aware of the gross world but relates to it very intimately.

Hence, it is metaphorically said that the seven worlds¹ are the Atma's gross body during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness—it physically lives in them, it mentally and emotionally relates to them, it is involved in them, and it is attached to them. During the Jagrat state, the Atma thinks that the external world is all that there is to it in existence, that the truth about which the scriptures speak is the external physical world with which it physically interacts during this state. But the deluded Atma forgets that the scriptures also speak that this world is an imagination of the mind because it has its origin in the mental wish of the supreme Creator to create something, that therefore it is artificial, deceptive, deluding and entrapping by its inherent nature. It becomes difficult for the Atma to realise the truth of this conclusion of the scriptures as it physically interacts with the gross world and feels its present in tangible terms. Therefore, the Atma takes to this world like fish to water, not realizing that this plunge would land it in a

grave bog of slush and quicksand. Therefore, the otherwise immaculate and untainted Atma, which is regarded as the pure consciousness personified, becomes tainted and corrupted by all the characteristic negativities, unholy influences and demeaning qualities typical of this world.

[The seven worlds represent all forms of the living creation, and all forms of creatures that live in them. Hence, they symbolically refer to all forms of life where the Atma or the pure consciousness is aware of the existence of the external gross world—even in a rudimentary form.]

The Atma uses its nineteen symbolic ‘mouths’² to eagerly devour or passionately taste and imbibe the sweetness of the external world and the numerous comforts and pleasures it has to offer.

[Even as a man uses his mouth to partake delicious eatables, this Atma uses its so-called mouths to ‘taste or sample’ the extraordinary charms and juicy succulence of the external world, its material comforts and the pleasures of the sense objects. And just like the man gets addicted to some tasty eatable, the Atma gets hooked to the world and its charms. It then goes out to hammer and tong to grasp the world and ‘devour it’ in a symbolic manner by remaining engrossed in it and thinking of nothing else but this world like a hungry man let loose on a dining table. The Atma gets hooked to the world and its material sense objects. Rather, the world attaches itself to the Atma like the leech which sucks the blood of wisdom, erudition, rationality, enlightenment and truthfulness out of the Atma, making the latter lose its pristine pure, uncorrupted and blissful nature. The Atma acts like a greedy bee that hops from flower to flower sucking a bit of nectar from this and a bit from that. It also behaves like a greedy bird that hops from one fruit to another on a tree, nibbling a bit of all of them till the end of the day, resulting in destroying all the fruits, littering the ground under the tree, but still remaining unsatisfied, and feeling tired at the end of the day.]

That supreme and sovereign entity which enjoys this gross world and is aware of its existence is called ‘Vaishwanar’. This is the supreme Brahm’s first Paad or aspect. It is also the first form or state of existence of the Atma. (5).

[Note—¹The seven subtle forms of the world are represented by the seven words pronounced by Brahma, the creator, at the time of creation. They are the following—Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha, Maha, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyam.

According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following lokas— ‘Bhu’ or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; ‘Bhuvaha’ or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; ‘Swaha’ or the heavens known as Brahma’s abode; the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; ‘Maha’ or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; ‘Janaha’, so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; ‘Tapaha’ or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and ‘Satyam’ or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

According to some legends, the distances of various mythological Lokas from the earth or Bhu Loka is as follows—the Bhuvha Loka is situated at a distance of 25 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Swaha Loka is situated at a distance of 50 Lakh Yojans from

earth, the Maharloka is situated at a distance of 1 Crore Yojans from earth, the Jana Loka is situated at a distance of 2 Crore Yojans from earth, the Tapa Loka is situated at a distance of 4 Crore Yojans from earth, and the Satya Loka is situated at a distance of 8 Crore Yojans from earth.

1 Yojan = a distance of 4, 8 and 16 miles according to different calculations. It is usually taken to be equivalent to 8 miles.

1 Lakh = one hundred thousand (1,00,000). 1 Crore = ten Lakhs (10 x 1,00,000).

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:— the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

The Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 4 also refers to these seven Lokas as being a part of the first Paad or leg or limb or aspect or facet of the cosmic Brahm.

²The nineteen symbolic mouths of the Atma are the different organs, both gross and the subtle through which it interacts with the external world and recognizes it at all. These are as follows—(a) the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin; (b) the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, anus/excretory and genitals; (c) the five Prans or the vital winds such as the main Pran which controls the very life of the creature and all other functions including the other Prans or vital winds, the Apaana which controls digestion and excretion, the Samaana which helps in distribution of nourishment and blood equally throughout the body, the Vyan which control the activities of other winds and helps in maintaining pressure and balance in the body, and the Udaana which controls the power to rise and move around; and (d) the four ‘Antahakarans’ are the four sheaths that surround the Atma and form its subtle forms; these are the food sheath, the vital air sheath, the mental sheath and the intellectual sheath. [According to the Shaarirak Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 4, the four aspects of the ‘Antahakaran’ (the inner-self consisting of the subtle body; the conscience; the sub-conscious) consists of the following four units—viz. the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (the faculty of reasoning, thought, understanding, attention, the sub-conscious etc.), and Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and the accompanying arrogance and hypocrisy; lack of humility, simplicity and piety).]

These are called the so-called ‘mouths’ of the soul because it is through them that the soul partakes of this world. The entity whose gross body enjoys and experiences this world is called the ‘Viraat’ at the macrocosmic level and ‘Vishwa’ at the microcosmic level. This is the 1st step to understand the supreme Soul called ‘Parmeshwar’ or the supreme Lord known as Brahm.]

“Verse no. 6 = The 2nd state of existence of the Atma, the pure consciousness, is called the ‘Swapna state’ of existence, or the dreaming state. The imaginary world that is visualized by the latent ‘Vasanas’ (passions, desires and yearnings) that are inherently present in the sub-conscious of the creature is called a ‘dream’. This is an imaginary world inspired by the Vasanas present in the bosom of the creature.

During this state, the man is virtually lying unconscious and completely inactive in the physical sense as his gross physical body is completely inactive and lying like a log of wood. He lies on the ground as if he had no life in him, and was like a dead man as far as his external activities pertaining to his gross body and its organs are concerned. But during this state of existence known as Swapna (dreaming), the mind remains very much active though the external gross body and its sense organs are completely inactive. During this state, the mind, accompanied by the sub-conscious, is as active as it was

during the Jagrat (waking) state, the only difference being in the level of its activity. So, while in the Jagrat state its activity pertained to the gross world, during the Swapna stage this activity is happening in a subtle level. A man dreams because the mind and the sub-conscious conjure up a most fascinating world in which the Atma lives during this phase of existence. To a great extent, the capacity of the mind to 'imagine and fly' is fully unleashed and tapped in one's dreams as opposed to the physical world while the man was awake—because while the latter phase presents many physical barriers of practical nature, none such obstacles are there in one's dreams. In some senses, the world of dreams is fancier and more charming than that of the physical world of the waking state simply because in this subtle state of existence the mind is given wings to imagine and fly according to its wishes without having to cope with any limitations of the physical gross world. [For instance, a man cannot fly in practical terms when he is awake, or he cannot physically jump from a tall building without aid and survive as this would be nothing less than a suicidal jump, he can indeed attempt such feats while dreaming. In fact, the full potentials of the mind and the sub-conscious are unlocked during the dreaming phase—as is proved occasionally when insurmountable problems of daily life face by a harried man find their solutions when he sleeps, leading him to wake up with answers to the same problems that had defied all attempts to solve them earlier.]

It is the mind that imagines, and not the gross body. Therefore, during the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness, the Atma is very much active and aware of the happenings around it, but instead of them being related to the gross plane of existence they are now confined to an imaginary world conceived in a 'dream'. Hence, 'dream' or the Swapna state of existence of the consciousness is synonymous with that which is an 'imaginary' conception of the mind without any physical gross dimension. It is something that has no real physical existence and pith. In other words, the Atma or the consciousness exists in its 'Sukshma' or the subtle form now in the dreaming state.

For all practical purposes, the Atma (or the creature's 'self' or his consciousness) interacts with this imaginary world of dreams during the 'Swapna' state of existence in the same way as it had been doing in the gross world while it was awake during the waking state called 'Jagrat'. That is, even during a dream, as long as it lasts, the Atma thinks that it is actually interacting with all the participants of that dream; it weeps, it laughs, it plays and it talks with them all as if they were alive and for real in the virtual world. For this purpose, the Atma uses its 'virtual' nineteen organs or mouths as it had been doing while it was interacting with the physical gross world while awake, though now they are in their 'subtle forms' instead of their gross forms.

Therefore, even in the dream state of existence of the Atma, there are seven worlds and nineteen mouths, though they exist in a subtle form, and not in their gross forms. The Atma lives in this subtle world of dreams, is an integral part of it, identifies its self with it, is influenced by it and is as involved and attached to its components in the same way as it did during the waking state.

That Atma which exists in this subtle form, that Atma which exists in the subtle world, and that Atma which uses the subtle organs to interact with this subtle world, is called 'Taijas'. This Taijas is the microcosmic subtle form of the Atma which has its counterpart at the macrocosmic level of creation in the 'Hiranyagarbha'. The latter therefore is the macrocosmic subtle aspect of the cosmic Consciousness very much like the Taijas is at the microcosmic level.

The Taijas has all the constituent parts of the 1st step or stage (called the ‘Vishwa’) as described in the preceding verse, but instead of being gross by the virtue of its association with the external gross world of material sense objects it now is in a subtle form as it is associated with a subtle world. Instead of being in contact with the deluding outside world involving its gross organs of action and perception, it is now more subtle in nature being based on the mind and its capacity to imagine and fly. [But it must nevertheless be noted that the Atma, the pure consciousness, still does not find pure peace and happiness as it is still buffeted by waves of emotions and the influence of Vasanas in the subtle level of its existence during the dreaming state of its existence as much as it was distracted and influenced by the physical world during the waking state. The only obvious difference is that during the dreaming state there is no physical barriers and limitations that are natural to the gross body and the gross physical world which has limited the stupendous potentials of the Atma. As compared to the physical gross body, the subtle mind has stupendous powers and potentials—the mind can fly and imagine things that were simply incredulous to even speak of during the waking state of the body, thereby lending the Atma with equal potentials to imagine and reach those realms where it could not ever hope to do while awake. In brief, the Swapna is called ‘subtle’ as it gives ‘wings to the Atma’ and enables it to perform deeds that it was unable to in the Jagrat state. The physical world that exists during the waking state imposes certain inhibitions on the Atma, but all such fetters are removed while it dreams, and therefore it can do unimaginable things during its dream which would be unthinkable for it to do during its interaction with the world while in its waking state of existence.

During the Swapna or dreaming state of existence, the external stimuli from the outside world cease to affect the mind, but the latent and inherent tendencies, called the various ‘Vasanas’, create an imaginary world of perceptions and actions which are far more colourful than the actual world of the waking state, and which form an independent world of their own, called the world of dreams. This state of the Atma is not gross like the 1st stage, but it is a subtle state of existence of the consciousness, the state known as the Taijas state.

The word ‘Taijas’ is derived from the root ‘Tej’ meaning ‘energetic, fast, dynamic, agile, full of vigour and vitality’. It is obvious from the above discussion that the Atma does indeed possess these potentials during the dreaming state of its existence. The word ‘Taijas’ also refers to light and its illumination. Hence, the Atma in this state is illuminated by the virtue of its inherent ability to create something from nothing—i.e. to ‘dream’ of things that do not have any substance and then be convinced that this imaginary world is truthful.] (6).

“Verse no. 7 = The ‘sleeping state’ during which the person does not desire/wish to enjoy any of the objects of this materialistic world and is neither conscious of their existence, a state when he does not even dream of any imaginary non-existent world—such a state of existence of consciousness is called ‘Sushupta’ or the deep sleep state of consciousness. This state is beyond the dream state, and is the third state in the hierarchy of existences in which the Atma or the pure consciousness lives. It corresponds to the third Paad or limb or aspect of the supreme Brahm who is the cosmic Consciousness personified.

Where the gross organs of the gross body represented by the organs of perception (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin) and action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory), as

well as the subtle organ represented by the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect have become defunct or stand eliminated, that eclectic state of existence of the consciousness is called Sushupta.

The body which houses this state of the Atma is called the 'causal body'. It is so-called because the Atma or pure consciousness that lives in this state is the entity that is the 'cause' of the creation of both the world of dreams in the Swapna state as well as the world of material sense objects during the Jagrat state. During this Sushupta state of consciousness, the entire world, both the real as well as the imaginary, coalesce and merge into nothingness or non-being. They are now most quietly and imperceptibly shrunk into the entity that was the 'cause' of their existence at all in the first place. That is why it is called the 'causal' body.

The wise entity that was empowered with the knowledge that enabled it to create something and then sustain it is called 'Pragya'. It lives in this causal body. This Pragya is none other than the Atma or the pure consciousness, also called the 'true self' of the creature. This Atma of the individual is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma of creation. At the individual level of the creature, it is called 'Pragya', while the same entity in its macrocosmic level is called 'Ishwar'—or the supreme Lord. It is 'Lord' as it is the central Authority that not only determines the existence of both the worlds—the Swapna as well as the Jagrat—but presides over them, enjoys what they have to offer or suffers from them, and then decides when to get rid of them.

This state of Sushupta is indicative of the dissolution of creation as nothing then remains. Then two options are available—either the Atma reverts back to the earlier two states of existence, or proceed ahead to the fourth state of Turiya which is actually a permanent state of Sushupta.

The entity living in the causal body and known as Pragya is one of its kinds; it has no duality and no parallels. It is an image of eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity, and it is wise, enlightened, realised and truthful. It is this entity that enjoys this world of eternal bliss and tranquility. It is pure consciousness and enlightenment personified. These virtues are its 'mouth', i.e. it accepts anything using these virtues as its accepting organs. In other words, it judges the world using the yardstick of enlightened consciousness, and not the way the mind had been judging it previously. The mind has a tendency to 'fly' in the vast sky of imagination, while the intellect 'moves' on sound ground of logic and rationality. Wisdom and erudition weighs everything and makes the creature aware that what he believes to be real is actually false and misleading. This is the function of the enlightened Atma. Once the sun of wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the creature's spiritual horizon, he finds immense peace and tranquility because all ghosts and phantoms arising in the darkness created by delusions and ignorance are eliminated for good.

In terms of Vedanta, the causal body encloses the Atma which is surrounded by the bliss sheath. When this Atma is not disturbed by constant interference by the mind and the intellect, it remains oblivious of the outside world, and being comfortably ensconced in the bliss sheath, it remains blissful and peaceful.

This Pragya (wise, enlightened, knowledgeable, erudite and sagacious) aspect of the Atma, which is pure consciousness, is the symbolic third Paad or limb or aspect of Brahm.

[The Atma or the soul of the creature is trapped in a body having these three layers of the body that are like sheaths that surround the soul—the gross body (verse no. 5), the subtle body (verse no. 6) and the causal body (verse no. 7). As soon as these are dissolved or removed or done away with, the Atma enjoys a state of merger with the eternal Atma of the cosmos. Or in other words, the individual Atma of the creature becomes one with the Parmatma, the supreme transcendental Atma. This Parmatma is also known as the Supreme Being, the supreme Brahm, and the cosmic Consciousness in the form of the cosmic Soul of creation.] (7).

“Verse no. 8 = The supreme Atma or Consciousness that exists beyond the third state of Sushupta, i.e. that state of consciousness which transcends the earlier three states related to this world, is said to be the fourth Paad or aspect of Brahm. It is called the Turiya state.

The Atma that exists in this fourth state called the Turiya or transcendental state is the one that is said to be the creator or progenitor of the other three states. [When the pure consciousness decides that it wishes to interact with the world, it would have to retrace the path followed by it to reach this higher spiritual state of Turiya—i.e. it would have to pass through all the three stages mentioned in verse no. 5-7. But if it decides to get rid of the world and find eternal peace, it will not do so. Then in such a case, the person who has reached this fourth state of consciousness, called the Turiya, would remain in this world like other men do, but would be a totally changed and transformed man—he would be totally immune to this world and its charms and temptations, as well as its pains, miseries and sufferings. He would seem to be awake and going about his normal duties, but internally he would be in the state of deep sleep, not at all being aware of or interested in what the body, both its gross components as well as its subtle components, do. He would be virtually ‘sleep walking’ as far as the world is concerned. All the characteristics that are enumerated below in this verse are of the Turiya state of consciousness.]

The Atma in this Turiya or fourth state of existence is called the ‘Parmatma’ or the supreme Atma—for now it is not an ordinary Atma of the creature that is affected by the deluding influences of the world, but beyond such considerations. It is also known as the ‘Ishwar’ or the Lord of the creation—for now it has reached the state when it no longer relates its self with the mundane world of material sense objects, it does not wish its comforts and pleasures, but has risen high up to occupy a much exalted stature that makes it ‘superior’ to all the rest in creation. Such a high Atma is Parmatma and it is also the Ishwar or Lord of creation. It is called ‘Ishwar’ because it is the undisputed Lord of all that exists. It is this Atma that has not only created everything but also enjoys them and eliminates them should it want to do so. In other words, if a wise man so wishes and is firmly determined, then he can easily forgo the attractions of the world in a moment by just making a firm decision that he is not interested in them. This world exists only because the Atma, or the consciousness which is the ‘true self’ of a creature, wishes it to exist.

[According to Vedanta, Ishwar represents the sum-total of all the causal bodies in this creation. This is because Ishwar is the ‘cause’ of coming into being of whatever that exists in this creation. Anything, no matter how inconsequential and miniscule, that has an existence owes its presence to the Ishwar. It is like the case of line or any other figure drawn on a piece of paper. Its origin is in the first ‘dot’ that was formed when the tip of

the pen had first touched the paper. The line or the figure is merely an extension of this dot. If the line is retracted and seeks its original point it will come back to this dot. If there is no dot, the line cannot be drawn. Similarly, everything in this world has its origin in this single 'Ishwar', and the rest is simply an extension of this Ishwar.]

The supreme macrocosmic Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, is the Soul or essence or the Tattwa of creation, and like its counterpart present in the causal body of the individual creature, it is also Pragya—i.e. it is wise, enlightened, awake, conscious, realised, intelligent, sagacious and erudite.

This Parmatma is all-knowing and omniscient as it lives inside the secret inner chambers of the creation in the form of the Atma of all the creatures. Being an 'insider', he knows everything; he is privy to the inner thoughts and ideas of the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect of the creature; nothing is hidden or out of sight of him.

Being a resident inside the bosom of all the creatures in the form of their Atma, and being all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent by the virtue of it being the most subtle and sublime entity known as 'consciousness' in creation, this Parmatma is known as 'Antaryaami'—one who lives inside everything and knows even that which is not known to the outside world.

Parmatma or the cosmic Atma is the cause of everything in existence—hence it is the 'supreme Creator'. It is this Atma that is the origin of all the Bhuts (elements), their sustenance and growth, and their final resting place. [This can be easily visualized by a simple illustration. When we wish to draw any figure on paper—say a line or a circle, we use a pencil or pen which makes a 'dot' at the spot where it first touches the paper. This 'dot' is then virtually stretched in all imaginable directions on the surface of the paper to make the desired shapes visualized by the mind—whether it is a circle or a triangle. If we retrace the lines the way they were drawn, we come back to the original dot. This symbolically depicts the way the creation is regressed.]

Since the Parmatma (Supreme Being) is 'consciousness' itself personified, it follows that he does not need any other thing to be the cause of his own origin—simply because it is 'consciousness' that makes 'life' possible in creation, it is 'consciousness' that magically transforms a lifeless gross body into an active and vigorous creature. If 'consciousness' is removed from this world, the latter would be absolutely worthless and lifeless. Left to its own accord, this world would not be able to remain alive or revive its self in case 'consciousness' decides to abandon it. This quintessential factor of life in this creation is known as the 'Atma'.

The cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness is a complete neutral entity and characterized by paradoxes. For instance, it is neither introvert nor extrovert. It is an embodiment and a fount of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity and knowledge on the one hand, but ironically the same Atma appears to exhibit the opposite virtues by allowing it's self to be accompanied or engulfed by Maya (delusions) that has helped this Atma to create the world of artificialty and entrapments.

This cosmic Atma is all-knowing as well as ignorant. It is omniscient on the one hand, but remains indifferent and neutral to all forms of knowledge on the other hand. It remains merely a mute spectator, a mere witness and a neutral observer of all that is happening around it, giving the impression that it is gross, blockhead, ignorant and dumb. Its neutral and dispassionate state is often misinterpreted in this wrong way. The neutrality of the Atma is due to the fact that it is renunciation and dispassion personified;

it remains indifferent to all delusions and hallucinations that are the hallmarks of this creation. But since it has to remain in this world, it appears to be influenced by all the taints and shortcomings that characterize this world.

This state of the Atma whereby it appears to exhibit dual characteristics which lead to confusions about its truthful form and nature as a sublime and subtle entity that is free from all grossness and delusions is known as the Jagrat as well as the Swapna states of consciousness depending upon the level of grossness or subtlety exhibited by the Atma respectively. This happens because during both these two states of existence, the Atma appears to be involved headon in the affairs of the world, whether this involvement is at the physical level of the gross world as it happens during the Jagrat state, or at the subtle level as it happens during the Swapna state.

The same Consciousness is uniformly and universally present in all the creatures of creation as their Atma, and in fact the entire creation is nothing but its image, but still each individual creature is unique and different from the other. Many factors that are extraneous to the Atma—such as the characteristic attributes of the gross body, the presence of the various Gunas in different and varying proportions, the level of mental and intellectual development, the Vasanas and Vrittis (inbuilt desires and passions, as well as natural tendencies and inclinations) that an individual possesses—go collectively to make an individual unique inspite of the same Atma living in them. [A person fights others as if they were different from his own self, and there is so much diversity and dichotomy in creation that it becomes impossible to reconcile what is said in the Upanishads and what is actually observed in the practical world.]

The Atma is said to be almighty so much so that its mere wish can create and destroy the world, but ironically it requires the aid of the ‘Shakti’ or energy and power and dynamism of Nature to do anything at all. [This is best understood by the story of Ramayana itself. Lord Ram was Brahm personified, and therefore he should have killed the demon king Ravana by mere wish, instead of having to go to Lanka to do so. Then there are versions of Ramayana, such as the Adbhut Ramayana of Valmiki and Adhyatma Ramayana of Veda Vyas which tell how it was Sita, an incarnation of Brahm’s Shakti, that had actually helped the Lord accomplish the astounding deeds that he is credited for.]

This Atma is so small and subtle as well as sublime that it cannot be heard, seen, felt, touched, smelt or held. It is not an object that can be used in the conventional sense a man uses other entities of creation.

The Atma has no attributes, qualifications and dimensions that can be quantified and measured. It has never been visibly seen or observed, it has never been practically used and experimented with, and it has never been comprehended, grasped or caught either by the mind-intellect complex or by the sense organs of perception and action.

The Atma has no specific characteristics, qualities, virtues or attributes that can be used to define and qualify it. It is such a miraculous and inexplicable entity that it cannot be incorporated as a subject that can be comprehended by deep research and ponderings. It is beyond the purview of thought, imagination, intellect and conception. [That is, this supreme entity cannot be reduced to any physical matter that can be researched and experimented in a laboratory. It cannot be made a subject to be judged by the calculating mind which has a natural tendency to reduce everything to logic and rationality.]

The Atma cannot be even indicated or represented by indirect methods, such as by the use of signs, formulas, symbolism, metaphors, similes, analogues and examples. The

only holistic and comprehensive proof of its existence and truthfulness is the ethereal experience that one has upon attaining self-realisation obtained when one reaches the higher states of super conscious existence known as the state of Samadhi. It is experienced only by attained and self-realised seekers. This supreme, ethereal, divine and holy entity is completely devoid of any delusions and falsehoods, any deceit and artificiality.

The Atma cannot be comprehended as it is beyond the scope of the mind and intellect. There is nothing in existence that can be used to compare the Atma with. There is no sign that can be used to indicate anything about the Atma. The only way to know the Atma is to 'experience and witness its presence' in the form of the 'super consciousness', and other vital life-factors of existence such as the Pran (or the vital winds). [That is, if one was to search an entity known as the Atma with the help of certain characters or virtues, no matter how great and magnificent they may be, one would fail in his search. This is because the Atma is extremely subtle and sublime by nature, and it has no grossness and density whatsoever that can be perceived by the sense organs of the body, including the mind and the intellect. That is why it is said that the Atma is beyond comprehension and reach of the sense organs of the creature. However, the existence of the Atma can be experienced during higher levels of existence which are in consonance with the plane in which the Atma actually exists. It is just like the case of modern radio communication where one can listen to a particular station only when he is tuned to that frequency.]

It is absolutely calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil; it is beautiful and auspicious; it is the ultimate Truth and Reality; it is the benevolent benefactor of all and provides all auspiciousness and welfares (i.e. it is 'Shiva').

Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the 'Advaitya Brahm'. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

[That is, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated here. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaitya means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is 'Advaitya'. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one, and not two, inspite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is 'Advaitya'. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as 'Advaitya Brahm'. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the future—is 'Advaitya Brahm'.]

Those who are well-versed in the essence of all spiritual and metaphysical knowledge, those who are blessed with wisdom and erudition of the highest order that has enabled them to have deep insight into the fundamental universal truth of everything in creation in its essential form, call this supreme transcendental Truth and the ultimate Reality of creation as 'Brahm' and the 'cosmic Atma' or 'Consciousness'. It is the fourth Paad or limb or step or form of Brahm.

In other words, the wisdom to understand what has been said of Brahm in this verse is the fourth and the last step to realise the truthful and essential nature of the supreme transcendental Brahm, about the Atma, about the pure consciousness that exists

at both the macrocosmic as well as the microcosmic levels of creation at the same time. The fourth Paad of Brahm is the latter's cosmic transcendental form that goes beyond the gross and the ordinary level of the subtle that borders the gross level of existence. It corresponds to the higher level of existence of super consciousness that is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, that is all-knowing and omniscient, that is almighty and supreme. [This fourth Paad is equivalent to the Turiya state of consciousness because it transcends the mundane and moribund existence of the Atma in this physical gross body that is bound to this physical gross world of material sense objects, thereby forcing the otherwise eternally free, ethereal, sublime and subtle Atma (the consciousness) to lead a trapped and deluded existence as long as it remains confined to this gross body and attracted to the gross world. and forced to live in and interact with and .] (8)."

Now let us see what *Pranav Upanishad* has to say on the subject—"Now we shall elucidate about and unravel the secret of the supreme knowledge of Brahm, the transcendental Lord who manifested himself as Lord Vishnu whose deeds are most strange, mysterious, stupendous and fascinating. This secret, sublime and subtle knowledge called 'Brahma Vidya' is so potent and powerful that it is able to incorporate 'fire' in its self (1).

Those who are expert and well-versed in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm have unanimously asserted and declared that the divine word OM is the imperishable Brahm (i.e. it is a synonym for Brahm). Its form, habitat and existence in all the three dimensions of time (past, present, future) are being discussed now (2).

In it (the divine word OM) are incorporated the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), the three Lokas (worlds—celestial, terrestrial and subterranean; it also means 'Bhu'— earth, 'Bhuvaha' —the sky, 'Swaha' —heaven), the three Vedas (Rig, Sam, Yajur), the three divine fires ('Gaarhapatya' meaning the fire of the household hearth, 'Dakshinaagni' meaning the fire used as a witness to charities, 'Aahavaniya' meaning the fire of the fire-sacrifice), the three full syllables or letters (A, U, M), and the half syllable represented by the 'dot' (the '◌̣' Anuswar). This is the truthful, pure, auspicious and welfare providing form of Brahm (who is in the form of OM) (3).

The Rig Veda, the earth, the Garhapatya fire and Lord Brahma (the creator)—these entities are said to be incorporated and embodied in the first syllable/letter 'A' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, according to the definition and elucidation given by those who are well-versed in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm (4).

The Yajur Veda, the sky (of the solar system), the Dakshinagni fire and Lord Vishnu (the sustainer) —these are said to be incorporated and embodied in the 2nd syllable/letter 'U' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, and they impart great fame and majesty to it with their own divine glories (5).

The Sam Veda, the heavens (abode of Gods), the Ahavaniya fire and Lord Shiva (the annihilator)—these are said to be incorporated and embodied in the 3rd syllable/letter 'M' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, and lend their stupendous fame and majesty to its glory (6).

The radiant, bright and splendorous glare of the sky in the vicinity of the Sun is incorporated in the 1st syllable/letter 'A', while the glorious illumination of the sky in the vicinity of a full moon is established symbolically in (i.e. represented by) the 2nd syllable/letter 'U' which is present in the middle of the divine word OM (7).

The last (3rd) syllable/letter 'M' represents the divine 'fire' element; it is a fire without any smoke (i.e. it is a brightly lit fire) and is as dazzling, brilliant and splendid as the electric. The 3 letters or syllables of OM (A, U, M) should be treated as embodying or personifying the combined glories of the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (8).

The light emanating from the wick of a burning lamp in which the flame is erect (vertical and burning brightly, without wavering) is equivalent to (or is incorporated in) the half-syllable 'Anuswar' (' ँ '), which is like a dot above a concave dish, present on the top of the geometrical symbol or sign or emblem representing OM, i.e. 'ॐ' (9).

The wick of that flame which is symbolic of the 'Supreme Knowledge', which in turn is synonymous with Brahm, is like the stem of a lotus flower. It appears to pass through the nostrils right above into the head and shines there. [This is a metaphoric representation of the brain which has the subtle intellect in it. It is the intellect that illuminates and brightens the personality of a creature. It is the intellect that illuminates the world for the creatures and removes the darkness of ignorance, it is the intellect which makes the brain worth its value—because even animals have a brain but no intellect like that of a wise man—and which sets it apart from a man's brain in whom the light of knowledge is extinguished just like the value and utility of a lamp lies in the lighted wick and the light emanating from it and not the size, design or quality of material used to make the unlighted lamp.] (10)

That lighted wick (representing the half-syllable or 'Anuswar' present on the top of the symbol of OM which is — ॐ) infuses life and exercises control over the creature by the means of 72 thousand 'Naadis' (network of nerves and veins) spread across the body (11).

[Note—The analogy of the chariot can be cited here— the 'Anuswar', sitting on the top, is the 'charioteer' because it is bright and illuminated like a wise and intelligent person who knows where to take the chariot while sitting astride it, the 'Naadis' are the 'reins', the various sense organs are like the 'horses', and the body is like the 'chariot' itself. The creature (the Atma which is his true and real form) is the 'passenger'.]

When a seeker/aspirant is just near attaining fulfillment of his aim of obtaining emancipation and salvation, he hears a resonating vibration like the sound emanating from a bell made of bronze when it is hit by a gong/hammer. This sound is that of OM (Pranav or Brahm) in its 'sound' form. All seekers aspire to hear it (12).

The seeker/aspirant who becomes engrossed in hearing that sound which represents the divine word OM, is said to or deemed to have acquired a stature which is equivalent to Brahm. He acquires the essence of bliss, beatitude, happiness and joy, called Amrit, which is the essential elixir of life yearned for by those who are wise and enlightened. Verily, this is a certainty (13).]

So we observe in wonder and awe how our ancient 'seers' could 'peep' into the deep recesses of time and space at a time when there were no electronic gadgets, no satellites, no radars, no radios and no x-ray telescopes or spectrometers or sonometers etc. They simply used their own brain and mind as the radar, their intellect as the computer and radio receiver to catch, comprehend and analyse the subtle sound waves emanating from

deep space, a privilege their descendents— we —are denied because of our grossness and indulgence in the artificial world.

The Rig Veda asserts: ‘speech is known by the erudite, wise, and scholarly knower of the Vedas to consist of four parts. The 1st three of these (the ‘Para’—the supreme, transcendental Brahm; the ‘Pashyanti’ —unformed language, and the ‘Madhyama’—mental language) remain un-manifested in the depths of one’s being. It is only the 4th that people speak’. (Rig Veda, 1/164/5). This has also been asserted in Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 23.

The Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of conscious life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of creative primary subtle activity in the cosmos that ultimately led to the unfolding of this incomprehensibly vast and miraculous creation, it naturally follows that the Atma, the fundamental essence of life, or the soul of all that exists as truthful life forms in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad.

The *Param-hans Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 6 describes the four main states of existence and its other divisions, bringing the total to sixteen states in which the supreme transcendental Brahm exists in this creation in relation with the sixteen aspects of OM. This is because if it is deemed that the entire creation is incorporated in the ethereal word OM that is synonymous with Pranav and Brahm, then these sixteen Matras of Brahm vis-à-vis the four states of consciousness as narrated above can be applied to the different aspects of OM as follows—]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Jagrat state exists represents the four fractions of the first letter ‘A’ of the word OM. [These four Matras are ‘Jagrat-Vishwa’, ‘Jagrat-Taijas’, ‘Jagrat-Pragya’ and ‘Jagrat-Turiya’. Hence, the first aspect or Matra of OM represented by its first letter ‘A’ symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Jagrat or the waking state of consciousness in this creation.]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Swapna state exists represents the four fractions of the second letter ‘U’ of the word OM. [These four Matras are ‘Swapna-Vishwa’, ‘Swapna-Taijas’, ‘Swapna-Pragya’ and ‘Swapna-Turiya’. Hence, the second aspect or Matra of OM represented by its second letter ‘U’ symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Swapna or the dreaming state of consciousness in this creation.]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Sushupta state exists represents the four fractions of the third letter ‘M’ of the word OM. [These four Matras are ‘Sushupta-Vishwa’, ‘Sushupta-Taijas’, ‘Sushupta-Pragya’ and ‘Sushupta-Turiya’. Hence, the third aspect or Matra of OM represented by its third letter ‘M’ symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Sushupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness in this creation.]

And finally, the four Matras or aspects in which the Turiya state exists represents the four fractions of the Ardha Matra of the word OM. [These four Matras are ‘Turiya-Vishwa’, ‘Turiya-Taijas’, ‘Turiya-Pragya’ and ‘Turiya-Turiya’. Hence, the fourth and final aspect or Matra of OM represented by its Ardha Matra symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Turiya or the transcendental state of consciousness in this creation.]”

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse 4 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition says that the Atma is beyond the concept of Naad. It is because the Naad has been visualised in the form of the cosmic ethereal subtle sound heard when one pronounces the word OM. It is believed that it is from this OM that the rest of the creation has evolved, i.e. Naad and OM have some 'beginning', no matter how ancient and primary. On the contrary, the Atma is said to be 'eternal and infinite, having no beginning and end, and even outlasting the end of the present creation and preceding the next one'. The Atma is the eternal cosmic consciousness which initiates the process of creation, and hence of Naad in the first place. It's not the other way round.

In order to understand the genesis of creation in terms of Naad, this cosmic sound represented by the word OM has been broken up in its constituent sound elements represented by the various letters and syllables such as A, U, O and M. These alphabets symbolise the basic forms in which sound representing cosmic energy in its most fundamental and basic form exists in this creation. Then each unit is further analysed and assigned symbolisms—such as the letter 'A' for example was envisioned to represent the appearance of the first signs of creation, the letters 'U' and 'O' for its evolvment, development, expansion and growth, and 'M' for its conclusion. Then a geometrical symbol was devised to physically depict this word OM, and it is 'ॐ'.

Sound has its own classifications which are used in the field of learning music. But the Atma is such a unique and magnificent entity that even though it has been said that it is like the cosmic sound called the Naad in this Upanishad's verse no. 3 as stated above, but it is only to emphasise the fact that like the Naad it too is a cosmic and enigmatic phenomenon, but this observation should not be treated too literally because the Atma is much superior to the Naad and does not qualify to be treated at par with any physical phenomenon like the Naad. The Naad is actually (physically) heard by ascetics who have risen above certain level in their meditation much like the Atma which is also experienced and witnessed by all spiritually enlightened aspirants.

But the comparison ends there, for the Atma cannot be analysed and classified and mastered like the sound element is done by an expert musician who can fiddle and play around with it to create masterpieces of music, or by teachers of metaphysics and theology who try to explain the complex phenomenon of creation by using the word OM as some model in a science laboratory.

Hence, OM is the best instrument to invoke the blessings of the supreme, transcendental Lord or Brahm. It is used to start and finish all religious worship thereby indicating the completion of the cycle of the worship. It also metaphorically establishes that 'everything started off from Brahm, went its due course, and ultimately fell back or merged or coalesced with Brahm. The symbolism is too obvious and glaring to be ignored.

So, in conclusion we can say that neat categorization of 'Naad' or 'OM' is not in accordance with the pluralistic, holistic approach of ancient Indian tradition. Hence, to categorize and define 'Naad' and 'OM' separately will be against that tradition. The above discussion is simply to emphasis that whether the Upanishad talks about the 'Naad' or 'OM' or 'Pranav' or 'Brahm' or 'Brahmaand' (universe/cosmos/world), they ultimately mean and speak of the same thing. The allusions, the allegories, the metaphors, the analogies may be different, but the essence is the same.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 2 asserts that the Naad is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness—“The Atma has manifested itself as the cosmic Naad which is the primary source and primordial activity that set forth the process of creation.”

Now let us examine what *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 6 has to say about OM. “The three subtle letters of OM (i.e. A, U and M) are like the three mouths of the Vedas (i.e. they represent the three primary Vedas, the Rig, Sam and Yajur, embodying holistic knowledge about all aspects of creation). These three components of OM represent all the three Gunas in creation (i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and Tama Guna which determine the basic character and nature of all living beings in creation).

OM, being ethereal, invisible, sublime and subtle in nature, has no definitive forms, no specific definitions, and no distinctive attributes and characteristics that can ever define or characterize it.

It is steady and uniform; it is without any faults, shortcomings and taints of any kind related to this worldly existence; and it has no support for itself because it is self-supporting and self-sustaining (6).

[Note—As it would be observed here, the ethereal word OM representing the entity that is supreme transcendental and cosmic Divinity personified, and which is known by the other synonym of Brahm or Pranav, has such virtues that appear to be contradictory to each other, making OM and its principal subject, the Brahm, so very abstract, enigmatic and esoteric that it becomes a subject beyond the comprehension by logic and rationality of the intelligence-based thinking process of the mind, making it virtually impossible to be grasped and understood. So the only way to witness the truthfulness of its existence and supernatural powers is to personally experience its all-pervasive presence, and this is achieved by meditation and contemplation, and not by indulging in endless debates and trying to arrive at the truth by too literal an interpretation of the various scriptures which is devoid of their practical implications, because they would only add to confusions rather than removing them. This irrefutable fact has been asserted in *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 8. The mysterious nature of Brahm has been expounded in *Tejobindu Upanishad* in its four Cantos, 3-6.]”

The *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli (canto)1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 8, verse no. 1—“[This Valli is dedicated to the mystical divine word OM which is regarded as the most auspicious and holy sound in existence. The profound metaphysical and spiritual importance of OM has been elaborated upon in a separate appendix of this volume besides a brief note at the end of this Valli.]

The learned and wise teacher proclaimed—‘The word OM is Brahm personified because OM represents the entire gamut of creation, both the animate as well as the inanimate, the visible as well as the invisible, and the comprehensible as well as the incomprehensible. This world is a visible manifestation and tangible evidence of OM.

OM is the solemn affirmation and a respectful assertion of these facts’.

The disciple insisted that more should be explained about this mysterious entity. He pleaded with the teacher—‘Oh revered teacher! Tell me more about OM’.

The erudite teacher said further—‘Those who sing or chant the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda use OM as a salutation and as a holy invocation at the beginning of such singing or chanting.

All the Mantras¹ (which are sacred mystical phrases or words or syllables having astoundingly glorious and divine esoteric powers), which are as potential and powerful as invincible weapons in the sphere of spiritualism and metaphysics, are said (or chanted or repeated for the express purpose of benefiting from their powerful dynamic powers) by invoking OM at the beginning and at the end of such incantatory chanting or rhythmic repetition of Mantras, and using it as the medium to make these Mantras effective and potent. [In other words, without OM these Mantras lose their potentials and affect; they become ineffective and impotent. OM is like their ammunition; it is also like the vital spark that ignites that ammunition; it empowers these Mantras to become effective mystical weapons to overcome all forms of hurdles faced by the creature, whether they be related to the mundane world, called the 'Adhi Bhautik' problems, whether they be related to the spiritual world, called the 'Adhyatmic' problems, or whether they be related to the unfavorable Gods and malignant stars, called the 'Adhi Daivik' problems.]

During the fire sacrifice, the priest called Adhvaryu³ invokes this divine word OM with each ritual and offering, at the beginning of it and at the conclusion.

It is by invoking OM that the head priest known as Brahma invokes and welcomes the Gods at the start of the fire sacrifice and announces the commencement of the sacrifice ritual. It is by the pronouncement of this mystical divine word that the symbolic arrival of the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm is announced by the chief priest called Brahma. [Brahm is a disembodied Divinity that appears or reveals itself in the form of the virtues of auspiciousness, holiness and piety that descends upon the venue of the sacred fire sacrifice as a halo. The different Gods that are invited are actually manifestation of the various dynamic forces of creation that are invoked to make the endeavour of the fire sacrifice successful.]

It is this divine and auspicious word OM which is pronounced at the very beginning of each offering to the sacred fire to make each offering holy and sanctified.

Brahmins or the learned ones assert that it is the word OM that is said to salute the Supreme Being at the time of commencement of study by a disciple (in order to seek divine blessings, to become intellectually empowered, and to ensure that what is being taught and learned are clearly grasped and firmly remembered by the student). In fact, the wise and enlightened one who has embarked upon the study of the sacred scriptures pronounces OM and solemnly affirms his sincere desire to attain the supreme and auspicious Truth known as Brahm. He indeed is able to access that mystical and divine entity Brahm with the help of this most powerful, most potent and most strong medium of OM. [In brief, OM is the greatest of the Mantras prescribed in the scriptures. When added as a prefix to other Mantras, it becomes the crown jewel and indicates the supreme Authority which is to be honoured and paid tribute through the medium of the main part of the Mantra that follows the pronunciation of OM. When it is used as a suffix at the end of the Mantra, it represents the final act of reverential bowing to the supreme Authority who was honoured and worshipped by the previous part of the Mantra just said.] (1).

[Note—¹It is to be especially noted here that delineation has been made between the hymns of the Sam Veda chanting and other types of *Mantra* chanting. This does not at all mean that the hymns of the Sam Veda do not qualify as Mantras. Nothing is far from the truth—in fact every hymn of any Veda is called a Mantra. The only reason to separate the hymns of Sam Veda from those belonging to other Vedas is the fact that the former are 'sung' melodiously like any song, while the latter are chanted in a rhythmic manner much like the staccato sound emanating from the wheels of a speeding train.

The concept of Mantra has been explained in detail in a separate appendix of this volume.

³A fire sacrifice requires four types of priests —the Brahmins who were the senior most priests representing Brahma and they invoked the Rig Veda hymns during the fire sacrifice. It was done at the beginning and in complete silence mode. If for certain reason whatsoever, the priest spoke before the silent invocation of the deities of the Rig Vedic hymns was completed, it meant breaking of a sacrosanct rule and therefore was tantamount to defilement of the ritual. The role of the other three priests (Hota, Adhvaryu and Udgata) came afterwards. But once defiled, the cycle of ritual got disrupted, which was tantamount to defiling of the whole sacrifice itself. And this was an unpardonable, horrendous sin according to the ancient tradition. What the text says is that by speaking during the silent mode, a Brahmin priest has caused a virtual fracture in the whole setup or has disrupted its continuity, though he might resume his silent meditation mode after speaking and breaking the silence once. But the damage has already been done. The minor disruption or fracture will affect the entire structure of the fire sacrifice of invocation of the sacred hymns according to prescribed method though the other three priests have not committed any offence.

A fire sacrifice or Yagya is performed to clean the environment because the various herbs that are put in the fire as offerings produce smoke and scent which has numerous antibacterial, antifungal properties. The fumes emanating from the fire pit clears the atmosphere around the site of the fire sacrifice even as chimneys spewing toxic gases from a factory can potentially damage and pollute the atmosphere. The wind carries the fume or smoke from the fire sacrifice to every direction, thereby cleaning the atmosphere of its impurity. Hence, it is likened to the Yagya itself.

The four types of Priests who preside over an elaborate fire sacrifice are known as Ritviks or Ritvijs. (i) Hota—he is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda; (ii) Adhvaryu—this is the priest who chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda; (iii) Udgata—he is the priest who sings the hymns of the Sam Veda; and (iv) Brahma—he is the head and elder class of priest who is a representative of Brahma the creator; he uses the hymns of the Rig Veda.

Each of these chief priests has a hierarchy of assistants or juniors who would help them in the performance of the elaborate rituals associated with a fire sacrifice. Depending upon their position in this strictly hierarchical setup, the donation received during a fire sacrifice was also divided between them.

(a) The first category of chief priests such as Hota, Adhvaryu, Brahma and Udgata were entitled to the largest portion of donation, and if the cows were to be donated, they had the largest share. (b) The second category of priests were junior to them, and they were called Prashata, Pratiprasthata, Brahmananchasi and Prastota. They worked under the chief priests in that order respectively. Their share of donation was half of what was given to the chief priests. (c) The third category of priests were called Achaawaak, Neshta, Aagnidhra and Pratiharta respectively. They were junior to the second category and their share of donation was one-third of what the chief priests got. (d) And finally, the fourth category, i.e. the lowest helpers or the junior most priests who were probably only apprentices were also four types who worked under the instructions of the third category. They were called respectively Graavastut, Neta, Hota and Subrahmanya. Their share of donation was equivalent to one-fourth of what the chief priests got.]

The *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72 describe OM and its profound influence on the spiritual aspirant, and how it aids his spiritual liberation and deliverance—

Verse no. 69 = The ascetic should practice to pronounce the syllables of the ethereal Mantra OM consisting of the three alphabets (A, U and M) for a protracted time in such a way that there is no pause, gap or break between pronouncing any two letters of OM, or between pronouncing two OM's one after another, just like the way oil flows in a continuous and unbroken stream on a flat and smooth surface.

This causes a resonance of the ethereal sound of Naad in the head which resembles the reverberating sound of a heavy gong hitting a huge brass bell (69).

[Note—Refer Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2 of this Upanishad.]

Verse no. 70 = This practice of hearing the Naad and pronouncing of OM helps the spiritual aspirant to get acquainted with and have an easy access to the cosmic Divinity known as Pranav or Brahm which is otherwise not known and not accessible as it is formless, unqualified, invisible, beyond the reach of gross organs of perception, and has no attributes whatsoever. This experience provides him with a sense of extreme ecstasy and contentedness at having had a contact or communion with this entity that is divine and cosmic.

The three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M are metaphors for the three stages of Brahm realisation. The first letter 'A' stands for the awareness and the first sign of the presence of Pranav or Brahm in the form of cosmic vibrations heard as Naad and conceptualized in the form of the eclectic word OM. This is what those who are experts in the chief doctrines of Vedas assert.

The protracted or prolonged sound of the second letter, the vowel 'U', is symbolic of the Bindu or the 'dot' which is placed on the top of the first vowel 'A' to produce its nasal sound. [That is, the letter 'A' with a dot on the top would sound as 'rum' or 'come' or 'sum'. Sometimes it is also pronounced as 'rung', or 'clung'. If this combination is pronounced for a protracted time, it would have a resonating affect.]

The concluding letter is the third one, viz. 'M', which is indicative of final rest when the ascetic has managed to take his Pran (vital winds) to the Brahm Randhra (the slit-like opening on the top of the skull) from where it finally escapes out of the body to provide final liberation and deliverance to the ascetic. After pronouncing 'M' the Mantra ends and the mouth is closed. This is also a metaphoric way of saying that the ascetic has found his final rest and ultimate peace.

When this Mantra called OM begins to resonate in all the twelve Naadis (listed in verse nos. 23-28), it is greatly enhanced because of the presence of the twelve vital winds in them as well. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 28, 32-34 in this context. The enhancement is made possible because the vibrations created by the humming or chanting of OM produce strong currents in the vital winds already present in the twelve important Naadis which result in a dramatic increase of the decibel level in which the cosmic Naad is heard. By and by the sound completely overwhelms the ascetic to such an extent that he hears nothing else except the sound of the Naad.]

When this stage is reached, it is said that the ascetic has gained full benefit of the Mantra and has consequentially gained the mystical powers that accompany such accomplishment. Now, he can use this Mantra to successfully finish any task he wants to do (70).

Verse nos. 71-72 = This Mantra of Pranav or Brahm, viz. OM, is potent enough to eliminate all spiritual obstacles.

There are four Bhumikas (stages of development of spiritual wisdom as described in detail in Canto 4)—viz. (i) ‘Aarambha’—the beginning or initiation when one decides that he would find true wisdom and the correct path that would provide him with final emancipation and salvation; (ii) ‘Ghat’—the acceptance and the subsequent filling of the inner self with noble thoughts and wisdom, becoming stable, calm, quiet, unmoving and unruffled like the air present inside an empty pitcher; (iii) ‘Parichaya’—introduction to, becoming aware of and getting acquainted with the cosmic Divinity that is present inside one’s inner-self as the all-powerful consciousness known as the Atma; introduction to and acquaintance with the highly evolved and developed path of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom that enables an aspirant to become aware of his pure conscious self and the fact that this ‘self’ of his is the same as the cosmic ‘Self’ of creation that is known as the all-pervading and almighty Consciousness that universally resides in the bosom of all living beings as their ‘self’, and that this is the only spiritual Truth in this existence [71], and (iv) ‘Nishpati’—completion or consummation of this process which implies the hearing of the cosmic Naad and tasting of the elixir of eternal bliss and ecstasy, known as Amrit, that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and reaching the final frontier of spiritual practice which culminates in obtaining liberation and deliverance of the soul, the final emancipation and salvation whereby the individual soul merges with the supreme Soul of the cosmos, never to take birth again. This is the ultimate goal which any wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant would yearn for, would strive for, would aspire for and endeavour to attain.

Now each of these four stages is being elaborated upon. The ‘beginning or initiation’ is when the spiritual aspirant abandons all his involvement with the external world and its activities that have three causes¹ for coming into being [72]. (71-72).

[Note—¹The *three causes* that on the one hand result in the creation of the world and on the other hand can find a solution for this malady itself are the following—(i) Upaadaan—the word means ‘acceptance, acquisition, knowledge; restraining of the sense organs; a material from which something is prepared, the ingredient’. All these connotations can be applied here. For instance, the man first acquires the knowledge of this external material world and all its sense objects, and then accepts its existence as a matter of fact. Since the existence of this world is based on belief and information, and since this world can be accepted only through the medium of the sense organs of the body, it can be eliminated by the same means. That is, elimination of the deluding and artificial world can be achieved only by acquisition of correct knowledge and beliefs along with practicing restriction of the sense organs. These organs are responsible for the man becoming aware of the existence of the world and its most alluring charms, no matter how illusionary or transient or painful they are in the long run. They entangle him in their web and tie him down in a vice-like grip with false promises of happiness, pleasure and comfort. If a man falls prey to this bait, he is trapped, while if he has the right knowledge and wisdom he would see right through the trick and avert a catastrophic destiny for himself.

(ii) Asamvaachi—to attempt to unite two dissimilar things into one entity; to try in futility to bring harmony between two basically disharmonious entities. For instance, it is like trying to unite water with fire. In the present case, this would mean to imagine something to be true although it is fundamentally and irrefutably false. That is, to imagine that this world is true and that it would indeed give peace and happiness is as incredulous and ridiculous to believe as imagining that the water seen in a desert mirage would actually quench one’s thirst. As is obvious here, this utterly fallacious and basically erroneous conception can be removed only by correct knowledge, wisdom and

enlightenment that comes with study of the scriptures and good company of saints and other holy men.

(iii) *Nimitta*—the word means ‘motive, cause, reason, factor etc. which is the progenitor of something or some event; something done on behalf, or on account of’. For instance, the potter is the creator of the clay pot; he is a means by which the formless clod of earth is given a definitive shape, design and size. So if there was no potter, there would be no pot with this shape or size. In the present context, the spiritual aspirant researches the cause of the coming into being of this world although it is universally accepted in the scriptures that it is false and illusionary. He wanders how this happens—one the one hand it is false, and on the other hand he can actually experience and witness the presence of the gross world first hand thereby proving that it does not exist. It is then that he begins to ponder on the great metaphysical doctrines and axiomatic maxims enshrined in the scriptures, and espoused and expounded by them repeatedly. Regular and discreet study of the scriptures with an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and benefit from their teachings helps the man to discover the hidden ‘truth’ that cannot be seen by the physical eye of the body. He finds that it is his imaginative mind that has visualized this world to appease the sense organs. Therefore the remedy is also in the mind itself—and it is to stop imagining and become real. The mind, the aspirant realises, has to be leashed in and channelised properly to derive real spiritual benefit from its stupendous powers that were being misused by it in pursuance of falsehood and artificiality known as the world. He discovers that what is seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted is not always the ‘real and irrefutable truth’ of any thing or event. It is often misleading and far from the actual thing. For instance, the water in the mirage seen in the hot desert is very evident, but everyone knows that there is no water in it. Similarly, vested interests spread false rumors about certain things to suit their purpose, but it would be highly foolish to rely on them. When one suffers from high fever one feels extremely chilly though it may be a hot summer day with a scorching sun beating relentlessly down on earth. A sick man may not be able to relish any taste in food which might be as delicious and tasty as it can ever be for a healthy man. Artificial scents create an impression of fragrant flowers in the vicinity though there may be none nearby.]

The *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11—1.35 describe OM in the context of ‘Bhumikas’, the level of an aspirant’s spiritual development, and the four states of existence of consciousness:

“verse no. 1.11 = This seventh Bhumika is akin to the stage of meditation when the ascetic hears the cosmic ethereal sound called Pranav or OM resonating in his entire being. [The vibrations from this cosmic sound help to massage his nerves so as to make him experience an extreme sense of ecstasy which gives him a lot of spiritual thrill, peace and bliss which cannot be measured.]

This ethereal sound of cosmic Pranav or OM has four Bhumikas or components represented by the letters A, U and M followed by the Chandra Bindu (the dot-and-crescent-moon placed on a letter to produce the nasal sound resembling the hum of the bumble bee) (1.11).

“verse no. 1.12 = These subtle components of OM are equivalent to the different states of existence of creation, such as the gross, the subtle and the causal, followed by the ‘seed’ that is pure consciousness honourably ensconced in the causal body, being the ‘cause’ that gives life and meaning to the entire setup. [These four states of existence are further defined in the following verses.] (1.12).

“verse no. 1.13 = The four components are also equivalents of the four states of existence of the consciousness—viz. Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming), Sushupta (deep sleep), and Turiya (post Sushupta) (1.13).

“verse no. 1.14 = Each of the four components of Pranav (here a synonym of the supreme transcendental invisible cosmic entity known as Brahm) can be said to exist in these four states of consciousness.

Hence, the first component of Pranav represented by the letter ‘A’ has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the ‘Sthul’ or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the ‘Vishwa’ or the world at large (1.14).

“verse no. 1.15 = The second state of this ‘A’ is the ‘Sukshma’ or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called ‘Taijas’ or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.15).

“verse no. 1.16 = The third state of this ‘A’ is the ‘Beej’ or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called ‘Pragya’ or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives¹ (1.16).

[Note—‘To be ‘Pragya’ is a virtuous characteristic of the Principal known as the Atma. Another characteristic of the Atma is to be a ‘Shakshi’ or be a mere neutral witness to all that is happening around it in this world and whatever the body does in with its three component parts—viz. the gross, the subtle and the causal.]

“verse no. 1.17 = The fourth component of ‘A’ is its ‘Saakshi’ form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.17).

“verse no. 1.18 = [The same four states as were applied to the first component ‘A’ are now envisioned in the second component of OM, viz. ‘U’ as follows—]

The second component of Pranav represented by the letter ‘U’ has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the ‘Sthul’ or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the ‘Vishwa’ or the world at large (1.14).

“verse no. 1.19 = The second state of this ‘U’ is the ‘Sukshma’ or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called ‘Taijas’ or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.19).

“verse no. 1.20 = The third state of this ‘U’ is the ‘Beej’ or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called ‘Pragya’ or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.20).

“verse no. 1.21 = The fourth component of ‘U’ is its ‘Saakshi’ form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised in spite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.21).

“verse no. 1.22 = [The same four states as were applied to the second component ‘U’ are now envisioned in the third component of OM, viz. ‘M’ as follows—]

The third component of Pranav represented by the letter ‘M’ has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the ‘Sthul’ or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the ‘Vishwa’ or the world at large (1.22).

“verse no. 1.23 = The second state of this ‘M’ is the ‘Sukshma’ or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the

intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.23).

“verse no. 1.24 = The third state of this 'M' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called 'Pragya' or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.24).

“verse no. 1.25 = The fourth component of 'M' is its 'Saakshi' form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.25).

“verse no. 1.26 = [The same four states as were applied to the third component 'M' are now envisioned in the fourth component of OM, viz. 'Ardha Matra', the half-syllable represented by the Chandra Bindu as follows—]

The fourth component of Pranav represented by the 'Ardha Matra' or half-syllable called the Chandra Bindu has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the 'Sthul' or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the 'Vishwa' or the world at large (1.26).

“verse no. 1.27 = The second state of this 'Ardha Matra' is the 'Sukshma' or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.27).

“verse no. 1.28 = The third state of this 'Ardha Matra' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called

‘Pragya’ or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.28).

“verse no. 1.29 = The fourth component of ‘Ardha Matra’ is its ‘Saakshi’ form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.29).

“verse no. 1.30 = The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the first component ‘A’, i.e. the Jagrat (waking) state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the first, second and third Bhumikas. [That is, when the creature is in the waking state of existence in this world, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the three qualities of Shubecha, Vichaarna and Tanumanusi as described in verse nos. 1.4—1.6.] (1.30).

“verse no. 1.31 = The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the second component ‘U’, i.e. the Sukshma (subtle or dreaming) state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the fourth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the state of existence when his sub-conscious mind is fully though his external body is inactive, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the fourth quality of Satwa as described in verse no. 1.7.] (1.31).

“verse no. 1.32 = The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the third component ‘M’, i.e. the Beej or causal state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the fifth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the causal state of existence in this world, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the fifth quality of Asanskat as described in verse nos. 1.8.] (1.32).

“verse no. 1.33 = The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the fourth component called the Ardha Matra (Chandra Bindu), i.e. the pure and undiluted Turiya state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a perpetual state of bliss and peace obtained during this most exalted state of consciousness, pertains to the sixth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the post-causal state of existence in this world, i.e. when he is perpetually enjoying the eternal feeling of spiritual, contentedness, bliss and happiness that comes in the fourth state of consciousness called the Turiya state, he

would deem to be observing the sixth quality of Padaartha Bhavana as described in verse no. 1.9.] (1.33).

“verse no. 1.34 = The state of existence of the consciousness which is beyond the Turiya state, or which transcends the Turiya state, i.e. the ‘Turiyaatit’ state, stands for the seventh Bhumika. [This is the quality of pure and unadulterated Turiya when the cosmic reverberation of OM is heard and enjoyed by the spiritual aspirant, an unmatched spiritual experience which gives him extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy that is perpetual and never ending.] (1.34).

“verse no. 1.35 = An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the first three forms of Bhumikas (verse no. 1.4—1.6) is said to be a ‘Mumuksha’, i.e. one who desires to be liberated and delivered (1.35).

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 37, 102 of the Krishna Yajur Veda says that a practitioner of Yoga hears OM during higher stages of success in this practice—

Verse no. 37 = A person is said to be well versed in the essential tenets and teachings of the Vedas when he becomes acquainted with (i.e. when he witnesses and experiences first hand) the supreme Divinity and the Absolute Truth of existence. It is known as the cosmic Consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM. The sound of OM resembles the reverberations caused by the resonating sound emanating from a large bell, a sound which is in a continuous stream of vibrations much like the uninterrupted stream of oil flowing down a smooth surface¹, and which lies beyond the restrictions imposed by the physical characteristics of the symbol of OM having a Bindu, Naad and Kalaa (here referring to the sign of ‘Chandra Bindu’—the crescent-shaped moon with the dot on top—placed above the symbol of OM. [That is, when the spiritual aspirant is able to experience the vibrations of ether in his meditative state, the center of his brain which receives sensory perceptions from the external world is overtaken by the resonance of sound that prevails in the cosmic ether so much so that none of the impulses of the external world are able to disturb his inner peace and tranquility. He remains in a state of perpetual bliss and ecstasy because his mind becomes oblivious to the turmoil in the surrounding world. This rare and unique state of existence that is witnessed by seasoned ascetics is tantamount to having witnessed the supreme conscious ‘Self’ that is beyond the purview of the mundane world, and is immune to all delusions and the entrapping web that this world casts.] (37).

[Note—¹The ‘smooth surface’ here refers to the cosmic ether in which the Naad has had its origin in the form of the cosmic waves, oscillating in regular frequency which generated sufficient energy that in turn produced the cosmic sound identified by and encrypted in the word OM. The calm surface of this ether is the tranquil state of existence that goes beyond the mundane life full of restlessness and turmoil, and the presence of ‘consciousness’ in this state of existence is symbolised by the energy of the waves that create an oscillation in the cosmic ether. The best way to experience this phenomenon is to stand on the beach beside an ocean during the night when a continuous and indefinable roar is heard in the distance. This ‘distant’ roar is symbolic of Naad. It is also heard when one closes one’s ears with the fingers. When one is asked to describe the type of sound heard, there is only one word which would give an idea of how it sounds, and it is OM pronounced in a subtle but resounding manner when one hums this monosyllabic word OM. Refer also to verse no. 2-3, 102 also.]

Verse no. 102 = An expert practitioner of Yoga exercises hears a resonating sound resembling the music emanating from the Indian lute reverberating through the core of the Sushumna Naadi much like the hollow of the conch shell produces the sound when air is blown hard into it (102)."

Krishna Yajur Veda's *Akchu Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-43 ½ describe how the three states of existence (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) and the three types of bodies (gross, subtle and causal) came into existence as manifestations of the three letters A, U and M of the word OM:--"There is no difference between the object of all spiritual pursuits and the pursuant himself because both are the same pure consciousness called the Atma.

The entire creation has been revealed from this one indivisible entity represented by the eclectic word OM. This word OM has three letters—viz. A, U and M. They correspond to the Vishwa (the gross body and its waking state of existence), the Taijas (the subtle body and the dreaming state of existence), and Pragya (the causal body and the deep sleep state of existence) respectively."

Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 38 of Krishna Yajur Veda says—"The ethereal vibrations of the cosmos that resonates imperceptibly in the entire being of the living creature (in the form of the resonance of the divine Mantra OM¹ as revealed during meditation) is like the stringed bow, while the Atma (the consciousness and life factor in the body that enables a man not only to live but to live with intelligence, conscience, wisdom and enlightenment that would help him to hear this divine resonance of cosmic Consciousness in his inner self and personally witness the presence of Brahm inside his own self) is regarded as the arrow mounted on this bow². A wise and erudite man uses this to aim at Brahm (the supreme transcendental Truth and Reality of creation; the ultimate divine 'self' in the context of the creation as a whole; the Supreme Being who is the protector and guardian Angel of the spiritual aspirant; the ultimate spiritual goal of life that can give permanent liberation and deliverance to the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death).

Therefore, one should not be apathetic towards this spiritual goal and pursue it relentlessly, sincerely, and without any indolence or carelessness.

Only like a person who concentrates upon the target can ever hope to successfully pierce it with the arrow, only a sincere and diligent person who is steady and relentless in his spiritual pursuit can ever hope to reach and realise Brahm, and not otherwise (38)."

[Note—¹The Mantra OM pertains to Pranav, the cosmic transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. During meditation and contemplation (Yoga and Dhyana), OM is used as a universal Mantra to focus one's attention and harness the divine energy of the cosmic Consciousness. Like a kite riding a wind or a ship riding a high tide, the individual's atomic 'self' called the Atma rides atop the crest of the cosmic sound waves that the repetition of OM generates in his inner self to reach the top of the head, in the region called the Agya Chakra located between the two eyebrows where the Atma experiences an extreme sense of bliss and contentedness that makes it realise its true nature. As the repetition continues, the sound waves gather more energy and finally the Atma reaches the top of the head, in the region called the Brahm Randhra which is a hair-like slit in the skull (cranium) which opens up due to these cosmic vibrations and allows the Atma to

escape from the prison of the body for ever. This is called the 'Kaivalya' Mukti or the final liberation and deliverance of the creature.

The entire process of how this comes about has been described in Yoga Upanishads. For instance, the Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20, the Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, the Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17, the Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 103-106—all of them describe the concept of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra.

The vibrations caused by the constant chanting of OM create such an ambience of tranquility that it completely overwhelms the spiritual aspirant so much so that he thinks of nothing else. This is like the surging waves of the ocean which just splashes on the shore and drenches everything present there. Just like music is soothing for the nerves, the different notes and tones of OM massage the aspirant's nerves and calm him down.

²The metaphor or analogy of the bow and arrow—refer also to Mundak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse nos. 3-4.]

The *Tarsar Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2 and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-7 describe the metaphysical concept of OM in detail. The relevant verses are quoted here—

“Canto 2, verse no. 1 = The word (or the symbol of) OM is an image of the supreme, transcendental Brahm. It is the word (OM) that is to be worshipped, revered and honoured with this understanding. It consists of eight letters in their root form. These eight root words are the following—‘A’ is the first letter; ‘Oo’ is the second; ‘Ma’ is the third; the ‘dot’ is the fourth syllable; the ‘Naad’ is the fifth aspect; ‘Kalaa’ is the sixth aspect; ‘Kalaa Teet’ is the seventh; and ‘Param’ is the eighth aspect or facet of OM. Since the word OM has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the creature's soul, it is called ‘Tarak’. One should recognise this word as having this potential, and worship it as such [1].

“Canto 2, verse no. 2—4 = There is a famous hymn in this connection. It states that the letter ‘A’ manifests as Brahma known as ‘Jamvaan’, the letter ‘Oo’ creates the God known as ‘Hari’, the letter ‘Ma’ manifests itself as ‘Lord Shiva’ who in turn manifests himself as ‘Hanuman’, the ‘Bindu’ (dot) reveals itself as ‘Shatrughan’ who is a manifestation of discuss held by Lord Vishnu (2); the ‘Naad’ (the cosmic background divine and ethereal sound, usually regarded as a ‘cosmic music’) manifests itself as ‘Bharat’ who is a revelation of Vishnu's conch, the stupendous powers and vitality, the strength and potentials that the male aspect of creation possesses, symbolised by the so-called sixteen ‘Kalaas’ of a man, is revealed in the form of ‘Laxman’ who is a manifestation of legendary hooded serpent (called Sesh-Nath) who holds the earth on its hoods, and is therefore called ‘Dharni-dhar’) (3); the ‘Kalaa-Teet’ aspect (of the Tarak Mantra), or that powerful aspect of the supreme Brahm that transcends all known definitions and parameters, is known as ‘Sita’.

Beyond all these is the entity that transcends all the above, or that which encompasses all of them, includes them in its ambit and even surpasses them infinitely. Verily, it is the supreme Soul of the creation called Parmatma; it is also known as ‘Ram’. He is the most exalted and the best male ever created in creation; he is a manifestation of the supreme, macrocosmic Male aspect of creation called Purushottam (which literally

means ‘the best, most exalted male’).[Lord Ram is a revelation of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and nourisher of the entire creation.] (4) [2-4]

“Canto 2, verse no. 5 = Hence, those who are wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened regard the word OM and its constituent letters (A,U,M), the syllables (dot) as well as the various other aspects (such as Naad, Kalaa etc.) as the all-encompassing and all-pervading supreme entity, and worship and revere it as such. OM is the complete, supreme, imperishable entity worthy of adoration, honour and worship. All that exists—whether in the past, at present or in the future—in so many myriad forms, such as the various essential elements of creation, the Mantras, the Varnas (classes in society), the Gods, the Chandas (poetical composition styles used in scriptures), the Rik (sacred hymns of the Rig Veda), the Kalaa (art, craft, skill, expertise, facet of anything), the Shakti (powers, potentials, strength, energy, stamina etc.) and Sristi (creation, animate as well as inanimate)—all of them are nothing else but the various manifestations or revelations of the same essential principle called OM. One must be fully aware and be enlightened about this matter [5].

“Canto 3, verse no. 1 = Sage Bharadwaj asked sage Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh Lord! Which are the divine Mantras (i.e. the group of especially empowered letters or words) that can please the supreme Lord (called Parmatma) so much that he makes himself available as a revelation (i.e. gives his divine vision to his devotees)?’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘OM salutations! I bow my head most reverentially to that supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is known by the names of Narayan¹ and Bhagwan², amongst his other names. He represents the letter ‘A’ of the divine word OM which manifested itself as ‘Jambaan’ (or as Brahma, the creator of this world—see verse no. 2/2 above)³. This Lord representing A personifies or embodies the three worlds represented by the words ‘Bhu’ (meaning the terrestrial world; the earth), ‘Bhuvaha’ (meaning the sky above the earth in its atmosphere), and ‘Swaha’ (meaning the heavens) [1].

[Note—(1) ¹Narayan is the name assigned to the supreme Lord. Usually it refers to Vishnu, the sustainer, but from the view point of the Upanishads, it is the Viraat Purush, the all mighty, all encompassing and all pervading cosmic Supreme Being.

(2) ²The word Bhagwan means someone who has the following virtues :—(a) ‘Aishwarya’—or glory, grandeur, majesty, greatness, omnipotence, power, flourish, supremacy, sway etc.; (b) ‘Dharma’ —or righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuous and noble conduct and thought; (c) ‘Yash’ —or renown with a good fame and name, having glory and majesty; (d) ‘Sri’—or possessing wealth, prosperity, fortune, opulence, pomp and pageantry; (e) ‘Gyan’—or knowledge, wisdom, erudition, expertise and enlightenment etc.; (f) ‘Vairagya’—or renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement with the material world. (3) The word OM has been elaborately dealt with in a separate appendix of this book under the title ‘Naad and OM’.

³The letter ‘A’ stands for the primary stage of creation when the process was initiated. It represents the beginning of creation, and that is why Brahma (the patriarch of creation) is being referred to here.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 2 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the letter ‘U’ of the divine and ethereal word OM.

This Lord manifested himself as Upendra (literally, the younger brother of Indra, the King of Gods; but here referring to Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant manifestation of Lord Vishnu) who is known by the name of Hari (which is one of the numerous names of Vishnu). This Lord represented by U personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha; the entire creation symbolically represented by these three words is but only a fraction of the vast and all-inclusive form of Vishnu. [2].

[Note—Lord Vaaman had measured the entire creation in his three steps in the fire sacrifice of king Bali. That is why he is referred to here as the God known as Upendra who has the entire creation under his domain. In the first step he had measured the entire earth represented by the letter Bhu, the second step covered the rest of the divisions of creation known as ‘Bhuvans’ of which there are fourteen in number and which are represented here by the word Bhuvaha, while the third step measured the king’s head, or the ‘self’ in a symbolic manner, which the word Swaha stands for. The word ‘Swaha’ has ‘Swa’ as its first part, meaning ‘self’.]

“Canto , verse no. 3 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the letter ‘M’ of the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord, represented by M, has manifested himself as Shiva, who in turn revealed himself as Hanuman (who is regarded as the greatest devotee of Sri Ram). This Lord personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha [3].

[Note—The third letter ‘M’ symbolises the conclusion of creation because when we pronounce this letter M we have to close the mouth. This closing of the mouth is indicative of end or conclusion of creation because when the man dies his mouth closes for good. Lord Shiva presides over this aspect of creation, and that is why he is depicted in a constant meditative and renunciate state as he had seen everything that was there to be seen in this world, and now has become totally disillusioned by their false charm and has therefore decided to renounce the world altogether.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 4 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the ‘Bindu’ (the dot) of the symbol for the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by the ‘dot’ has manifested himself as Shatrughan (one of the three younger brothers of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above). [4].

[Note—The ‘dot’ symbolises the ‘bull’s eye’ of a target that is aimed at by a skilled archer or a sniper or a marksman. The word ‘Shatru’ in the name of Shatrughan (Shatru + Ghan) means an enemy, while ‘Ghan’ refers to the heavy hammer used by ironsmiths to flatten a piece of metal, here symbolising a person who is able to ruthlessly batter, crush and conquer all enemies. So this term applies to the Lord who is able to destroy all the enemies of the spiritual aspirant if the latter seeks the Lord’s protection. Here the term ‘enemy’ applies to the different spiritual hurdles that a man faces in his path of finding emancipation and salvation.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 5 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the ‘Naad’ (the all pervading and omnipresent

cosmic ethereal sound), which in turn represents the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by Naad manifested himself as Bharat (one of the three younger brothers of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above) [5].

[Note—The cosmic Naad is present uniformly everywhere and is the herald of Brahm. In other words, the glorious and magnificent virtues of the supreme Divinity known as Brahm, as well as the all-pervading presence of this Brahm, are represented by this Naad. In the present case, Bharat represents this Naad as he is a representative of Lord Ram, the supreme Brahm manifested in his holy form, in the city of Ayodhya, the capital of the kingdom in which Lord Ram revealed himself as its king. Bharat's marked exemplary devotion for the Lord, and his sense of duty, morality, ethics, righteousness, probity and propriety are legendary and were praised by the Lord himself on more than one occasion. Bharat is a symbolic herald of these glorious virtues and the presence of universal divinity represented by Lord Ram in this creation. Bharat exemplifies the virtues one needs to inculcate as stepping stones that lead one to realisation of the supreme Brahm.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 6 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the ‘Kalaa’ aspect of the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by Kalaa manifested himself as Laxman (one of the three younger brothers of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above) [6].

[Note—The word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the ‘Viraat Purush’, who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime and transcendental supreme Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful, and this fact is indicated here in the case of Laxman. Even a cursory reading of the epic Ramayana indicates that without Laxman by his side, Lord Ram would have been lost in the quagmire of grief that he faced when his wife Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana. Laxman was Ram's comrade-in-arm, his pillar of strength, his solace and succour, and his only companion in times of adversities. Hence, Laxman represents all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature's only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, Laxman is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 7 = OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma who is also known by the name Narayan and Bhagwan, who represents the ‘Kala Teet’ aspect or facet of the divine and ethereal word OM which manifested itself as the supreme, omnipotent Goddess Bhagwati Sita, who in turn is the manifestation of the stupendous powers and potentials of the ‘mind’, and who personifies

or embodies the three worlds known as Bh, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above). [7].

[Note—According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this world is a creation of the mind. When Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, this resolve of his was in his ‘mind’, and to implement it his mind first created ‘Maya’, which literally means delusion and illusion. This Maya created this colourful canvas of the world as we know it. When Brahm revealed himself as Sri Ram, this Maya of his accompanied him as Sita. Hence, Sita is also known as ‘Maha-maya’ because she represents the greatest Maya of creation.]”

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 74-81, 85-88 describes OM and Pranav in the following words—

“Verse no. 74—It is ‘Pranav’ (Brahm) that is manifested, revealed and illuminated or highlighted in the form of three divine letters which constitute the divine and sublime primordial and primary cosmic word called OM. These three letters are ‘A’ (ॐ; as pronounced in ‘a’ book), ‘U’ (ॐ; as pronounced in room) and ‘M’ (ॐ; as pronounced in mother) which represent the three ‘Varnas’ (i.e., the classes of people depending upon their characteristic into which the society have been classified into—the noble, the medium and the lowly), the three Vedas (Rig, Sam and Yajur Vedas), the three ‘Lokas’ (i.e. the nether or subterranean, mortal or terrestrial and heavenly or immortal worlds), the three Gunas (i.e. the three qualities called Sata, Raja and Tama), as well as the three letters and three ‘Swars’ (i.e. the vowels, the consonants and the ‘Maatras’ or half syllables used to complete the sound of the consonants). These groups of three entities mentioned here symbolically represent the whole gamut of existence consisting of the various creatures with their different characteristics and features, their virtues, habits and qualities as well as their faculties of speech and thinking processes which mark the presence of intelligent life in this creation.

The 1st letter ‘A’ (ॐ) symbolically resides in the eye of the creature during the waking state of consciousness, the 2nd letter ‘U’ (ॐ) similarly resides in the throat during the dreaming state of consciousness, while the 3rd letter ‘M’ (ॐ) dwells in the heart in the deep sleep state of consciousness of the creature.

“Verse no. 75—The gross ‘Viraat Vishwa’ is a manifestation of the letter ‘A’, the radiant and subtle ‘Hiranyagarbh’ represents the letter ‘U’, and the causal, attribute-less, enlightened entity Ishwar symbolises the letter ‘M’. The letter ‘A’ has the natural quality called ‘Rajasic’ (desires to enjoy the world, having passions); its colour is red and it represents the creator of the world, Brahma. The letter ‘U’ has the quality called ‘Satwic’ (righteousness, nobility and virtuousness); its colour is white or grey and it represents the sustainer and caretaker of the world called Vishnu.

“Verse no. 76-78—The letter ‘M’ has the natural quality called ‘Tamsic’; its colour is dark and it stands for the annihilator Rudra. In this way, the origin of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra is deemed to be in OM or ‘Pranav’ which is the cosmic symbol of the Divine.

OM is the transcendental, supreme and primary cause for the origin of all that exists. The creator of the world, Brahma, is deemed to be incorporated and included as an integral part of the letter 'A' (i.e., the letter represents Brahma), Vishnu in the letter 'U' (76-77), and Rudra (Shiva) in the letter 'M'. It is only Pranav/OM that keeps shining brightly and brilliantly everywhere (or it remains visible, manifested or revealed in all its glory and splendour at all the places in its myriad forms) in the cosmos.

This Pranav/OM is said to be facing upwards (i.e. it is uplifting by nature) in wise, erudite, sagacious, adroit and enlightened persons, while it faces down (i.e. is degrading, degenerating and denigrating) in stupid and ignorant people.

“Verse no. 79—It is Pranav/OM that is present everywhere, in every direction in equal intensity and magnitude; it is immanent and omnipresent. A person who realises or understands this as it is, is indeed an adroit person who is an expert in the essential knowledge, tenets and teachings of the Vedas. Amongst enlightened and wise seekers/aspirants, this Pranav/OM is irrevocably, un-hinderingly, consistently and uniformly uplifting for their souls. (79)

“Verse no. 80—The ‘Naad’ (i.e. the cosmic background sound in the universe) is a subtle, sublime, constant, consistent, persistent, infinite, un-breaking, un-pausing cosmic sound or vibration which produces the sound equivalent to the audible sound produced by saying the word ‘OM’ (and it is also known as Pranav). It is a reverberating, resounding and echoing deep and grave sound with a heavy resonating bass which lasts for a long time like the striking of a gong or a large bell, and it comes in a steady, continuous stream of wavelike oscillating vibrations like the waves of a sea or the continuous, uninterrupted flow of oil. [The oil flow forms a tenacious string like treacle from one end to another.] The root or origin of this ‘Naad’ is what is known as Brahm; i.e. it has its origin in Brahma; it is Brahm which produces and radiates this sound.

“Verse no. 81—The root or the fount from where this OM/Pranav has originated is understandable and realisable only by great and exalted persons who have a penetrating, sharp, intelligent, focused and discriminatory intellect. It is illuminated, radiant, brilliant and splendorous, and is beyond the realm of speech (i.e., the speech does not have the ability to describe it). The great, wise and exalted person who has knowledge of this fact is indeed an expert in the essential teachings and tenets of the Vedas.

“Verse no. 84—The sense organs (of perception and action as well as the mind as distinguished from the intellect) of a creature tie it in fetters, but these fetters cannot tie the Atma. As long as there is the sense of belonging, longing and attachment (called having ‘Mamta’), there is the existence of an entity called ‘a creature’, but as soon as the shackling effect of these are removed, the entity called ‘a creature’ ceases to exist and have any relevance for the Atma. Consequentially, only the ‘Kaivalya’ form (i.e. the only one, matchless, unique, un-paralleled and truthful state that is the non-dual entity called the Atma, remains).

“Verse no. 85—The three Gods, viz, Moon, Sun and Fire, as well as the three mythological worlds represented by the words ‘Bhu’ (terrestrial), ‘Bhuvaha’ (the world

between the earth and the upper layers of the atmosphere and the solar system), and ‘Swaha’ (the heavens), are deemed to be present in the three letters (A, U, M) of the divine cosmic word representing ‘Pranav’, that is OM, which is a stupendous and splendorous, most brilliant and bright entity in the cosmos.

“Verse no. 86—In the three letters of the word OM are inherently present all the actions and deeds (“Kriya”), all the desires, aspirations and wishes (“Iccha”), and all the knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment (“Gyan”), as well as all the three cosmic energies¹ present in creation, called Brahmi, Raudri and Vaishnavi. [That is, the three letters of the word OM stand for creation, sustenance and annihilation respectively.]

[Note—¹The three cosmic energies referred here pertain to the three forms that the supreme Brahma had taken for the purpose of creation. ‘Brahmi’ is the energy with which Brahma creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. ‘Rudrani’ is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahma had made possible. ‘Vaishnavi’ is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities—creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.]

In other words, Brahma makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called ‘Rudrani’ to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.]

“Verse no. 87—One should assiduously, constantly and persistently repeat/chant it (OM) using his voice and divert all the efforts of the body towards it (such as doing righteous deeds selflessly, doing Tapa, which means penance, austerity and keeping of rigid and religious vows as well as sufferance, doing meditation, following the sacraments, and such like). By doing sincere Japa (repetition) of the divine Mantra OM in his heart, a person should be firmly established in the illuminated, brilliant, bright and splendorous OM which is a symbol or representative of the supreme and transcendental entity called Brahm.

“Verse no. 88—A person who constantly repeats the divine word OM in any state he lives, whether he has duly prepared himself, is purified and cleansed and ready for doing it or not, such a person will not fall in the trap of sins and get caught in its accruing fetters. He remains in this world like the petals of a lotus flower which are not affected by the surrounding water (because the water does not stick to them). [That is, such a seeker/aspirant remains aloof from the dirty world around it, and inspite of his living in it, he does so like the lotus flower which remains spotless and dry inspite of its habitat in dirty water of a lake or a pond.]

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 2, 9-13 and 16-18 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes OM and its constituent parts along with their metaphysical significance and spiritual importance for a spiritual aspirant who wishes to pursue Yoga and find the ultimate Truth that would give him eternal peace and bliss. It elucidates upon the mystical interpretations of the different subtle letters that form an integral constituent part of the divine ethereal word OM to emphasise the point that everything in existence has its origin in one single point source of cosmic Divinity known as Brahm or Pranav from which this vast myriad creation has sprouted, unfolded and spread out like the petals of a lotus flower or the rays of the sun radiating out from one single source. When the time comes, they would converge into that one single point from which they had branched out in the beginning. OM is the best medium to do 'Dhyan', i.e. it is the best tool that should be employed to reach the citadel of self and Brahm realisation and to help one focus his attention on and gain knowledge of the ultimate and absolute spiritual Truth of existence.

Now, let us see what it has to say—

“Verse no. 2 = The primary monosyllable word OM represents and incorporates in its ambit the entire gamut of creation—right from its conception and initial stages, to its unfolding and its final conclusion¹. Beyond it is the 'Naad²' (the cosmic background vibrations in ether that resembles the sound made by the distant rumbling of clouds or running of a train). This Naad is visualised as a crescent-shaped moon or concave bowl. The focal point of this crescent-shaped Naad (ॐ) is known as the 'Bindu (ॐ)³'. This is the point or the Bindu where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic ethereal sound (because it is here that the sound waves originating in the cosmos are focused). This reverberating cosmic sound resonates through the entire being of the aspirant when it is heard by him (during the practice of Yoga or meditation and contemplation), and at a certain point of his practice this resonance reaches such a crescendo that the practitioner's entire being is drowned in its vibrations so much so that he hears nothing else; his entire being is completely submerged and overwhelmed by it⁴.

This is the abstract stage of 'no sound' (because he hears nothing else except this Naad and therefore stays in a state of void as far as the hearing of the numerous sounds that have their origin in this gross world are concerned). This is the state of supreme bliss which is obtained when one rises above the mundane and reaches the citadel of spiritual enlightenment⁵ (2).

[Note—¹The symbol of this word OM resembles the vowel 'Ooo' or 'Uo' (pronounced as 'noose') of the Sanskrit language, with a crescent-shaped moon or a shallow bowl shaped sign on its top such that the hollow end points above. This sign is called the ²Naad because it represents the bowl of the cosmos in which the cosmic ether was present. It was in this bowl-shaped container that the primordial cosmic reactions took place leading to the cosmic explosion which provided the energy and created the raw materials from which the rest of the vast visible cosmos evolved and got moulded. Further, a bowl with parabolic shape is able to concentrate beams of sound at a point, called the focal point, where all the energy in the generated sound is concentrated. It would be so great that it might be ear-rupturing if one is not careful. This phenomenon is used to construct music halls with properly controlled acoustics so that echo and resonances do not occur. It is to be noted that in some buildings built to specific acoustic criterions, if one sits at the focal

point in it he would be clearly able to hear what is being said even at a distant point of the building.

From the Yoga point of view, the focal point where all the ethereal cosmic sound energy is concentrated is represented by the Bindu or the dot or the point which is said to be located at the tri-junction formed in the forehead at the midpoint between the eyebrows and the root of the nose. It is here that the practitioner of Yoga focuses his attention to obtain the deep insight into the secrets of creation and existence because it is here that he accesses great mystical powers and potentials.

Iconographically, this Bindu is depicted as a 'dot' (◉) placed on the crescent-shaped or concave sign of Naad (◌) which is located on the head of the symbol of OM in such a way that it dangles in mid air just at the geometrical focal point of this concave surface to indicate the 'focal point of cosmic energy'. The symbolic depiction of this Bindu, Naad and OM is the following sign—ॐ.

An example from modern life would easily help to understand this phenomenon. The 'satellite dish antenna' which is seen on the roof top of every modern home resembles this Naad and Bindu apparatus. The parabolic surface of the dish antenna is the crescent shaped bowl on the top of OM, and the electronic device called the SMPS held at the focal point of this antenna dish to collect the electronic waves transmitted by some remote satellite or television broadcasting station and collected by the parabolic dish to be focused or concentrated at this point is equivalent to the Bindu placed on OM. The set-top box or the electronic receiver in this setup is the meditator's brain itself which intercepts and then interprets the electronic signals and converts them into different pictures of the world that the individual sees just like the TV monitor that depicts the images that are collected by the dish antenna.

⁴How the cosmic sound of Naad sniffs out all other sounds and virtually drowns the person doing Dhyan Yoga, or concentrating his attention during meditation and contemplation can be experienced by even a layman. When one closes one's ears with the fingers, one hears a deep roaring sound in the ears. This sound resembles the distant roar of the ocean or the rumbling of the cloud or the trundling of the train. No other sound emanating from the outside world is audible now. This is what is meant in this verse here. When the practitioner of Yoga repeats the Mantra OM and focuses his attention on the sound components of this divine word, a stage is reached when the cosmic Naad represented by OM so much resonates in his head that it eliminates all other sounds, and the practitioner's nerves begin to vibrate with its resonance just like the tuning fork or the strings of a musical instrument that begin to vibrate when they are struck. This reverberating sound kind of massages the nerves and makes them numb to all other sounds as well as impulses. This is the state of blissfulness and ecstasy because the aspirant feels not only calmed down but also titillated. This makes him oblivious of all pain and worries of this mundane life; all the torments of the world are forgotten and dumped. This is also like a tired man who is sleeping soundly when he is completely immune to all sounds and all thoughts that were ruffling his senses while he was awake, making him rested and rejuvenated when he wakes up from his sleep.

⁵That is, all his sensory perceptions are dulled and numbed to the extent that he hears nothing. This is not some hypothetical imagination of the fertile mind, as even modern science has established that the ear of different animal species can hear different sounds depending upon their wave lengths and frequencies. Sound outside certain fixed acoustic limits is not heard by humans but can be heard by other animals, say for example dogs, cats, bats and birds. In the present case, the reverberations of Naad make all the sensory

nerves in the brain numb to the extent that they become oblivious to all sorts of impulses impinging on the mind's sense receptors.]

“Verse no. 9-13 = [Verse nos. 9-13 describe the different mystical interpretations of the three letters that constitute the divine ethereal word OM to emphasise the point that everything in existence has its origin in one single-point source of cosmic proportions, and it is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is from this Brahm that this vast, multifarious and colourful creation has sprouted, unfolded and spread out like the petals of a lotus flower or the rays of the sun radiating out from one single source. When the time comes, they would converge into that one single point from which they had branched out in the beginning.]

The supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is represented by the monosyllabic ethereal word OM. This Brahm has always been the aim (destination; objective) of all those who seek emancipation and salvation for themselves. OM is the all-encompassing and all-incorporating monosyllabic word representing that Brahm. [In other words, the profound glory and astounding greatness of Brahm can be metaphorically understood if one understands the divine sublimity and greatness, the mystical meaning and the magnificent spiritual import of this single ethereal word OM.]

The first letter ‘A’ of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the earth, the fire, the Rig Veda, the Vyahriti ‘Bhu’ (which is the first primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and Brahma himself. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter ‘A’ without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter ‘A’ represents the basis of creation, the foundation of creation. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. earth, fire, Rig Veda, Bhu and Brahma) would withdraw and take rest in the first component of OM. [In other words, the letter ‘A’ of the three-lettered word OM represents the ‘initiation and unfolding of the creation’ as all these entities listed in this paragraph are the symbolic bricks upon which the entire edifice of this visible conscious world have been founded.]

The second letter ‘U’ of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Antariksha (the sky above the surface of the earth), the Yajur Veda, the wind or air element, the Vyahriti ‘Bhuvaha’ (which is the second primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the sustainer and protector of creation, Lord Vishnu. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter ‘U’ without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter ‘U’ represents the middle part of the creation, viz. its development, growth and spread. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. sky, air, Yajur Veda, Bhuvaha and Vishnu) would withdraw and take rest in the second component of OM. [In other words, the letter ‘U’ of the three-lettered word OM represents the ‘development, growth and spread of creation’ earlier initiated by the letter A. This is because when we pronounce the letter ‘U’ we cup our lips to resemble the shape of the electric loudspeaker or a sound amplifier which is a metaphoric way of announcing that life has indeed come into being and it is spreading its wings. This letter ‘U’ virtually proclaims to the world that the supreme creator has already launched the world in the form of the letter ‘A’, and it is now evolving and developing continuously.

Since the entire creation has the genes of Brahm in it in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness, it follows that 'U' announces that the Lord is living here amongst us and no one need to search him anywhere else but in 'U'. There is an interesting twist to this symbolism. When the letter 'U' is pronounced, it indicates the spiritual aspirant himself because it is similar in sound to the word 'you'—i.e. Brahm is 'you'! Incidentally, this is also one of the great sayings of the Vedas—'Twam-Brahmasi'—thou art Brahm (refer Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

The third letter 'M' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Du-loka (the heavens; the deep recesses of the cosmos), the Sun, the Sam Veda, the Vyahriti 'Swaha' (which is the third primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the concluder of creation known as Maheshwar (i.e. Lord Shiva, the great Ishwar or Lord). They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'M' without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter 'M' represents the concluding part of the creation when what had emerged at the beginning of creation and is symbolically represented by the letter 'A', had then subsequently evolved, developed and spread in the form of this myriad colourful world as represented by the word 'U', would eventually come to rest as represented by this third letter 'M'. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. heavens or the vast fathomless cosmos, the splendourous and bright sun, the Sam Veda, Swaha and even the Lord of this concluding phase of creation, i.e. Lord Shiva or Maheshwar) would withdraw and take rest in the third component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'M' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'conclusion and final rest of creation' whose earlier initiation is represented by the letter A, and development by the letter U. This is because when we pronounce the letter M, we have to close our mouth, and this is indicative of 'taking rest and withdrawing one's external existence within one's own self'. The letter 'M' symbolises silence because we have to close our mouth (lips) when we pronounce it. So, if the word OM represents the entire gamut of creation starting from its very beginning that is represented by the letter 'A' which can only be pronounced by opening the mouth symbolising life as only living beings speak and not dead entities, followed by its growth and spread as indicated by the second letter 'U', then it is very obvious that its conclusion or end would be best depicted by 'M' and no other letter because 'M' is the only letter which requires the closing of the mouth symbolising death or end.]

The first letter 'A' is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the 'Raja Guna' in this creation. The second letter 'U' is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of 'Sata Guna' in this creation. Finally, the third letter 'M' is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the 'Tama Guna' in predominance¹.

In this way, the divine, ethereal and sublime word OM has eight parts or facets², four legs³, three eyes⁴, and five patron deities or Gods called the Devtas⁵ (9-13).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are the basic characteristics present in this creation in various proportions that decide the character traits and qualities of all the creatures in existence. Raja Guna is the quality and virtue that favours creation, and therefore the letter 'A' has been depicted to have this Guna. The colour yellow is the symbolic colour for any auspicious and constructive activity such as the initiation of the cosmos and the exercise

of creation of the tangible, visible and colourful world. Yellow is the colour of fire and energy which were needed to kick-start the cosmic process of creation.

Similarly, the Sata Guna is considered as the best of all qualities which enable the creature to perform his duties in a selfless and non-attached manner. Its representative colour is white. White is the colour of the sunlight from which all other shades of colour, viz. violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red have come into being. White is the colour or purity and immaculacy of the highest degree, and it indicates non-involvement and selflessness. In other words, once the creation has come into being, it is expected that the creature should perform all his destined duties diligently and faithfully, but remain totally detached from them and emotionally non-involved with them. This would ensure that he remains as pure as the colour 'white' which is the colour of purity and immaculacy. The creature, in order to retain his pristine pure form as the pure conscious Soul representing the supreme Brahm, should remain as untainted, untarnished and without a speck on his character as the pristine pure colour 'white'.

The third quality is Tama Guna which is the lowest form of these three Gunas in creation, and it is a symbol of ignorance and darkness. It represents 'sleep' in the sense that during sleep a man is unaware of what is happening outside, i.e. he remains ignorant and oblivious of everything happening around him though he might be physically present in that place. In other words, a man with a predominance of Tama Guna would not know what actually the truth is behind the façade of falsehood and delusions. Since ignorance of the reality is tantamount to 'darkness', the colour of Tama Guna is also dark. In the present context it means that when the creature dies, he thinks that his 'life has come to an end', which is a misnomer and not the reality. The life of the soul never comes to an end, and the soul is the true 'self' of the creature, and not his body which has died. Besides this, at the time of this apparent 'death', what actually has happened is that all the elements of creation have simply retracted into their primary source, the supreme Brahm, from where they would re-emerge at the appropriate time. This creation and its life is like a pendulum or a bouncing ball—for it continues to oscillate to and fro unless it is purposefully stopped. This is exactly the aim of spiritual endeavour—to first make the creature wiser about the facts and then telling him how to stop this oscillation of taking a birth and dying only to be reborn again, and stop getting entangled in worldly delusions and its horrific consequences.

This cycle of birth and death is metaphorically depicted by repeating the Mantra OM wherein the mouth has to be repeatedly opened and closed. The final emancipation and salvation is symbolised by being silent when the aspirant is so engrossed in meditation that he is not even aware that he has to repeat the Mantra—i.e. when his mouth is closed for good after the last time he had pronounced OM. This is the eclectic state of Samadhi or the Turiya state; it is tantamount to being freed from the fetters that shackle a creature to this world of material objects. When this becomes permanent, it is the Turiyateet state. It is marked by complete internal silence just like the one that prevails in the deep recesses of the cosmos. It is then that the entire being of the spiritual aspirant is filled with the vibrations of Naad because the latter fills the space of the cosmos where there is no other noise, where there is profound and deep silence. This is the successful culmination of Yoga when the dissolution of the consciousness is complete. Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 15, 22, and verse nos. 103-106 of the present Dhyana Bindu Upanishad.

²The eight parts or facets of OM are the following—the letters A, U, M, Naad, Bindu, Kalaa, Kalaa-teet and Param.

Now let us briefly examine what each of these facets mean. The metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of the three letters A, U and M have been explained

in verse no. 9-13 above, while the concept of Naad and Bindu have already been explained in detail in verse no. 2 and its note earlier in this Upanishad.

The word 'Kalaa' means the various subtle qualities that are present in all the creatures of the visible creation in varying proportions. There are variously said to be sixteen, eight, five or three in number, and collectively determine the behavioral patterns and thought processes of all the creatures. Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas that encompass all imaginable connotations of the existential world. The word also relates to the changing shapes of the moon and is used in the context of OM to indicate the changing frequencies and tone of sound that resonates in the cosmos, starting from a low level to rise and reach a crescendo and then gradually subsiding to a low murmur and finally stopping altogether, only to remerge after some time—the symbolic representation of the evolution and conclusion of the creation.

Now let us examine these Kalaas in all their possible nuances. (a) The 16 Kalaas of a man—In the context of the man, the word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature's only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, a man who is blessed with them is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.

These sixteen Kalaas of creation that are present in a man refer to the sixteen elements or primary components that form the basis of a man's very existence and his nature and temperament. These are the fundamental building blocks of his subtle and gross body, its characteristic qualities as well as the world surrounding him and how the man lives in and interacts with it.

These sixteen Kalaas or aspects of creation are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) Prithivi (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions, conduct and behaviour), and

(xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory). Reference—Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The Kalisantarana Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 says that these sixteen Kalaas are like sheaths or veils covering the Atma or 'self' of the man, and he can realise this glorious divinity residing in his bosom only when these Kalaas which are like impediments or hurdles in self and Brahm realisation are removed. When this Upanishad describes them as 'hurdles or impediments' in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.

(b) The 8 Kalaas of a man—The eight Kalaa of a man are the eight characteristic features by which all men are classified in this world. All men are classified into one or the other type depending on one or more of these eight attributes. These eight apparent criterions used for classification of all humans are the following—his name, caste, complexion, birth or family, race, nationality, Ashram (one of the four phases in life, such as Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas), and Varna (class of society such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad or Chandala). [Ref. Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 25 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

(c) The 5 Kalaas of a man—From the metaphysical point of view, the five Kalaas in a man are the following sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioral patterns in this world.

(d) The 5 Kalaas of Pran—There is another connotation of the phrase five Kalaas of a man in the context of the word Pran. Hence, there are five Kalaas of the Pran. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apan, Saman, Udan and Vyan. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apan' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Saman' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

(e) The 3 Kalaas of a man—Besides the above, some humans are said to possess three other special qualities which make certain people very unique and different from others. These are the following:—(i) Atishaayani Kalaa—this enables a person to successfully accomplish certain tasks very quickly and in a very short period of time which would be unthinkable to be completed even in the entire lifetime by an ordinary man. Such people are born prodigies and are said to be gifted with certain eclectic qualities and characters that are not normal. For example, the Adi Shankacharya, the great philosopher and exponent of Advaitya Vedanta and the person who had written matchless and unbeatable commentaries on the principle Upanishads besides establishing the four great pilgrim sites in the four corners of India, had completed in a young age of just ten-twelve years what would take an entire life to do. (ii) Viprinaamini Kalaa—this entitles the man to acquire the eight mystical powers called the Siddhis (such as Anima, Garima, Mahima, Laghima, Praapti, Praakramye, Ishwatwa and Vashistha) and show magical powers to become small or big, light or heavy, or even enter the body of another person or assume any shape or form he wants. (iii) Sankaamini Kalaa—this enables a person to transfer and install his own stupendous divine and mystical powers in another person and the second person can perform deeds that he would not be able to do himself and is even stunned at his own achievements. We have the example of this in Swami Vivekanand in whom his Guru revered Ramkrishna had established some divine spark which enabled the great swami to leave an indelible mark on the pages of history and religion by his landmark achievements and conquering the world by his speeches in America where he established the foundation of Vedanta.

(f) The 8 Kalaas of the Gods—The eight Kalaas of the Gods and their incarnations or manifestations—Since there are said to be a total of sixteen Kalaas and the ordinary man can possess the maximum of these five Kalaas with those who are especially gifted having an additional three as narrated above (bringing the total Kalaas possessed by human beings to $5 + 3 = 8$), the remaining eight ($16 - 8$) belong to the Gods or their incarnations or manifestations. These are the following—(i) Prabhvi—this is that magical and divine power possessed by the entity that enables it to make possible things that are impossible. For example we have the manifestation of Lord Narsingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu from a stone pillar to protect his devotee Prahalad from being killed by his own demon father). (ii) Kunthini—this enables the entity to neutralise the any of the effects of the five elements of creation, including their bad effects. For example we have Lord Shiva who drunk the horrible poison called Halahal that emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean without letting that corroding and very potent poison from harming him. (iii) Vikaasani Kalaa—the ability to develop, grow, expand or increase to any size, in any form and in any way one wishes. For example we have Lord Vamaan, the dwarf mendicant, who had measured the entire world in his three steps. (iv) Maryaadini—this is the character, attribute or quality which forces the God-head to observe and exhibit exemplary virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of his ability of doing anything it wants. It virtually ties him down or restricts him to following a strict and exemplary code of conduct that he successfully implements; these codes are difficult even for the Gods to implement. For example we have Lord Ram who led an exemplary life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as observe all the character traits and attributes that are so common with all the human beings inspite of the fact that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-incorporating Viraat Purush who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. (v) Sanghlaadini Kalaa—this enables the God-head to supersede or overrule the laws of Nature and perform miracles that even defy its laws. For example, Lord Krishna had created flowers and fruits even without season. (vi) Ahalaadini Kalaa—this enables one to physically remain away but spiritually be

constantly near one's object of devotion or contemplation and serve him or her. This is the way Radha was able to enchant Lord Krishna in spite of not remaining with him at all times. (vii) Paripurna—this word itself implies something that is wholesome and complete in all respects. It can therefore exhibit all the sixteen qualities or Kalaas in one go, or is the entity that embodies all these qualities in its self. Amongst the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Ram and Krishna are said to be Paripurna. The supreme Brahman is 'Paripurna' because nothing is missing from him; it is wholesome and complete. And finally, (viii) Swarupaa-wasthiti—this means the ability to withdraw or collect all the Kalaas exhibited by an entity and revert to its original and primary form when it is so wished by it. For example, at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna had withdrawn all his Kalaas into himself before bringing to close his sojourn on this earth.

(g) The Kalaas in other creatures—Now we come to other creatures who are neither humans nor Gods. The living world consists of both the animals as well as the plants. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas. The creatures in the living world have been classified into four categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it is called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(h) The 16 Kalaas of the Moon—This refers to each of the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon. The moon waxes and wanes in a fourteen day phase—each day it is different from the other. Thus we have fourteen Kalaas of the moon. Added to this is the full moon and the dark moon—i.e. two more Kalaas. Therefore the total Kalaas of the moon are $14 + 2 = 16$. These fourteen Kalaas have the following names—Amritaa, Maanadaa, Pushaa, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashini, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaa, Sri, Pritirangaa, Purnaa and Swarajaa. That is why Lord Krishna is said to belong to the Moon race because he possessed sixteen Kalaas. The symbolism is very stark.

(i) The 12 Kalaas of the Sun—This refers to each of the twelfth part in which the sun's diameter/disc has been divided. They are called 'Dwaadash Aditya', meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

That is why lord Ram was said to belong to the Solar race because he had twelve Kalaas possessed by the Sun. There is an obvious parallel here.

(j) Other forms of Kalaas—Other connotations of the word are the following:— (i) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (ii) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm which is complete and wholesome, it implies that what is being referred to is but only one or more fraction of the whole, and therefore this one or more fraction cannot be a complete definition of the whole. At the best, it can give a rough idea of the principal, but not the exact idea of what constitute Brahm. This Brahm is an entity so wholesome and grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous and astounding that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(k) The 64 Kalaas of Brahm—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has $64/4 = 16$ Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

(l) The Kalaa in the context of OM—In the geometrical symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed from the initial stages of creation to its complete closure. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Another example to explain is the moon's disc which appears to change every single day but all know that it remains the

same, and the apparent change in its shape is only due to the angle with which its lighted or dark surface is viewed from the earth.

Next facet of OM is called Kalaa-teet—i.e. the entity that is beyond the ambit of the concept of Kalaa; that is beyond the tangible and the visible spectrum of creation. The word 'Kalaa' has been defined above, and 'Teet' is used as a suffix to indicate something that is beyond its meaning or ambit; something that surpasses it. So if Kalaa means the world whose attributes and characteristics are changeable, for instance the changing shape of the moon every night which is called the moon's Kalaa, then something that is non-changeable, something that is immutable and steady, something that cannot be seen to change would be called Kalaa-teet. If Kalaa is regarded as the visible world in which the creature lives, then Kalaa-teet would mean the invisible world which is far beyond the inhabited world. Similarly, if Kalaa refers to the characteristics and qualities of the creature which are clearly exhibited by him, then Kalaa-teet would mean his hidden traits, temperaments, nature and thoughts.

The word Kalaa-teet in the present context of OM implies the macrocosmic aspects of creation which are not immediately visible and verifiable by the sensory organs of the body but are nevertheless true and existent. It refers to the vast invisible world beyond the known visible world where we live and which comes under the ambit of the word Kalaa as described above. The realm of Kalaa-teet is beyond the purview of this known world. It is like the Turiyateet state of Yoga which is the transcendental state of extreme blissfulness which surpasses and is superior to the Turiya state which is a preliminary state before Turiyateet state is reached.

Finally, there is the eighth component called the 'Param'—literally that which is supreme and ultimate, that which is Absolute and beyond which there is nothing; that which encircles even the outer periphery of creation. This Param is known as Brahm. In a sense it has no boundaries and definitions. It is the equivalent to the final dissolution of the creation into nothing from where there is no return. It represents the supreme transcendental Brahm as opposed to the creature and the visible creation which are metaphorically represented by word 'Kalaa', and the vast fathomless cosmos which is represented by the word 'Kalaa-teet'.

The eight facets or parts of OM also represent the four states of consciousness in which the entire creation consisting of the microcosmic world at the individual level and the vast fathomless world of the cosmos at the macrocosmic level exists. These four states at each level of existence multiplied by the two levels of existences (micro and macro) gives the figure of eight ($4 \times 2 = 8$). The four states are described below in the paragraph 'four limbs of OM'.

³The four limbs of OM are the four states in which the consciousness exists in this creation. They are the following—the waking state or Jagrat state of consciousness, the dreaming state or Swapna state of consciousness, the deep sleep state or Sushupta state of consciousness, and the Turiya state of consciousness which is the transcendental state of existence. A separate appendix of this volume explains them in detail.

⁴The three eyes of OM symbolically refer to so-called 'Triad' of creation—(a) such as the Trinity Gods named Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder; (b) the three states of mortal creation at the micro level—the gross body of the individual creature called the waker or Vishwa, the subtle body of the individual creature called the dreamer or Taijas, and the causal body of the individual creature called the deep sleeper or Pragna; (c) the three states of immortal creation at the macro level—the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation called the cosmic waker or Viraat Purush, the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation called the cosmic dreamer or Hiranyagarbha, and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation called the cosmic deep sleeper or Ishwar; (d) the three Gunas called Sata (the noblest quality in the

creation), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the meanest quality that a creature can possess); (e) the three Shaktis or powers and potentials that drive the world on—such as Gyan Shakti or the power of knowledge, Ichha Shakti or the driving power of desires and ambitions, and Kriya Shakti or the ability and strength to carry out actions and do desired deeds; (f) the three planes of time—such as the past, the present and the future; (g) the three worlds—such as the terrestrial world where earth-bound creatures live, the sky where those who fly live, and the heavens where the Spirits and Gods live.

⁵The five patron deities or Gods of OM are the following—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Ishwar the supreme Lord or the Viraat Purush who is above them and from whom these Trinity Gods have come into being, and the eternal transcendental Lord known as Brahm who is supreme and shines like the celestial Sun upon the entire pyramidal structure of the creation, illuminating it. The five Gods according to another version are the following—Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (the angry form of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation), Ishwar (the Viraat all-pervading macrocosmic body of the supreme Lord), and Sadaa Shiva (the eternal Truth that is absolute, calm, neutral and auspicious, that outlives all other Gods and from which they are all created in the beginning of creation.)

“Verse nos. 16 = It is from OM that all the divine Gods have come into existence; it is from OM that all forms of sound, audible or inaudible, in creation have emerged; and it is from OM that the entire creation and all its varied forms, both the animate as well as the inanimate forms, have sprung forth (16).

“Verse no. 17 = The divine word OM has three constituent parts called its Matras. The first is the ‘Hrasva’ Matra which literally means something that is little, small, light, miniscule, and of minimum attributes. It symbolically stands for the letter ‘A’ which is the first vowel of the Sanskrit language and the basic or primal sound in creation. It is also the first subtle sound from which the word OM has been envisioned to evolve. [It is like the sound made while pronouncing the word with the silent A—as in ‘*ahoy*’, ‘*ahead*’, *abase* etc.] It has the symbolic mystical ability to destroy all sins and misdeeds.

The long sound of the second letter of OM, i.e. the sound of ‘U’ or ‘Ooo’ (as in *room*; *boom*) represents the eternal bountiful treasury of divine assets and good fortunes that are easily made available to the spiritual aspirant. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that when one has realised the truthfulness of Brahm and the divinity of his own pure conscious Atma, the world in front of his eyes no longer remains one that is perishable and a cause of sorrows, miseries, pains and entrapments. On the other hand, he begins to see it in the light of Brahm-realisation as a vibrant manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness in all its radiant and brilliant colours and variations. The world becomes one big treasury of bliss and happiness when seen from the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment. The aspirant realises that it is in this very life that he can realise the supreme Truth by means of meditation and contemplation, by studying the scriptures and doing auspicious deeds, and in due course attaining the double benefit of enjoying the comforts and pleasures of this materialistic world and at the same time achieving the bliss of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. He begins to see the world in a positive light rather than from a negative angle. He finds the world friendly, brotherly and kind as well as full of charm, colour, interest, hope, life and energy, instead of seeing it as his enemy, being suspicious and skeptical of everything in it, and treating it as the root cause of his physical sufferings. This positive attitude is kindled in an enlightened man because he

sees this world as a manifestation of Brahm and not as a manifestation of Maya or delusions. Every coin has two sides; it depends upon how one looks at it. Such a wise man serves the supreme Lord when he serves the world, and not to serve his self interest.]

Finally, the last word 'M' is the half-syllable because it is said while the mouth is being finally closed after completing the pronunciation of the word OM (as when the mouth is closed after having said the word *mum*, *autumn*, *rum*). [The actual full letter of the Sanskrit consonant is 'Ma', and it is pronounced with an open mouth as 'M' in mother. This is not the case of its pronunciation in OM when the mouth is closed immediately upon its saying as done when one pronounces the word 'rum' for instance. So it is a 'half consonant' or 'half sound' of the letter M.] It symbolises the attainment of 'Moksha', literally liberation and deliverance from the gross deluding world symbolised by this perishable body and illusionary activities in search of that illusive happiness and peace. [This is because after death, the creature finds eternal freedom from all the horrendous troubles and unending miseries and sorrows that he had been subjected to while alive in this world. No matter how hard he tried, he was not able to break free from the shackles of miseries and horrors of this world which kept his peace of mind and bliss of soul at bay. He was buffeted by the agonies of the body as well as the unending cycle of sorrows and worldly delusions which hit him in regular waves much like tides in a heaving ocean, sweeping him off his feet and carrying him along in their wake. The world never lets him rest in peace. But upon self and Brahm realisation he finds eternal rest and peace symbolised by the closing of the mouth after complete pronunciation of the word OM. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the cycle of birth and death has finally come to an end for a creature who has realised the supreme Truth of Brahm, for now he turns inwards during deep meditation and contemplation on the supreme transcendental Divinity residing in his own bosom as his pure consciousness or Atma, and becomes completely silent and totally oblivious of what is happening around him in the gross world of material sense objects. Thus, all those inputs of the world which had hitherto been causing disturbances to his peace of mind and heart cease to have any impact upon him, leading to his eternal peace and happiness, his complete beatitude and felicity. Refer also Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 15, 22.] (17).

“Verse no. 18 = The cosmic Naad or the background sound that prevails in the entire cosmos is not audible to the ear of the ordinary creature. This sound is a continuous one much like the unbroken stream of oil flowing on an even surface. This sound resembles the prolonged reverberating sound that resonates when a huge metal bell is struck hard (18).

[Note—The various shades of sound heard when Naad is experienced by an attained ascetic is described in Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition and in Hans Upanishad, verse no. 16-17, 18-20 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]”

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 uses the analogy of the chariot to explain the importance of OM vis-à-vis a spiritual aspirant's journey to Brahm-realisation. This verse describes the vehicle that the spiritual aspirant should use to attain the supreme citadel of self-realisation which is akin to having access to the supreme Brahm. Two versions are presented here.

“A wise and erudite person who embarks upon the spiritual journey of self and Brahm realisation aiming to reach the abode of Brahm called the Brahm Loka¹ should

board a chariot or vehicle symbolised by OM² (the monosyllabic ethereal word standing for Brahm), make Lord Vishnu his charioteer³, and fix his attention on the target of Brahm-realisation by emulating Lord Rudra or Shiva⁴ who remains always in a state of Samadhi or a trance-like state of meditation where one enjoys perpetual bliss and ecstasy. [In other words, a wise aspirant who wishes to attain success in obtaining the eternal fount of bliss and eternity represented by Brahm, called Brahm-realisation, should be devoted to Lord Vishnu by leaving his destiny in the Lord's hand which is symbolised by making the Lord his charioteer. Since mediation is regarded as the medium of attaining spiritual success, Lord Shiva is invoked as the deity because Shiva is the patron God of ascetics. OM is the Mantra universally used in meditation, so this becomes a vehicle for attaining the state of Brahm-realisation.]

There is another way of interpreting this verse. One should ride upon the symbolic chariot of OM, and make Lord Vishnu its charioteer. Astride this glorious and divine chariot, he should investigate and explore the vast kingdom of Brahm, the Lord of creation. That is, the spiritual aspirant should research the actual 'truth' in existence behind the façade of illusions and delusions by using the divine Mantra OM and being devoted to Lord Vishnu. While doing this, he should retract his mind from everything else and remain perpetually in a state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of complete bliss and detachment) like the one obtained by Lord Rudra or Shiva. [Lord Shiva also happens to be the God of death and conclusion. So it implies that the aspirant always keeps in mind the fact that this life and the rest of the world would surely come to an end one day because everything that has a birth and existence is certainly destined to decay and die one day or the other. This would help him to remain always vigilant and alert against falling prey to the enticements of the deluding world which is mortal and perishable; it would prevent him from going astray from his spiritual path of seeking the Truth which is immortal and imperishable.] (2).

[Note—¹The word 'Brahm Loka' refers to the state of existence where the self-realised person becomes one with Brahm. It is the finding of the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, the attainment of liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death. It is like reaching the citadel where the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is attainable. It is to be noted that this Brahm Loka is actually not located somewhere in the hypothetical corner in the universe called the Heaven, but in the spiritual aspirant's own heart where his Atma lives, because this Atma is a personification of Brahm.

²OM is the divine Mantra used during meditation as clearly laid out in Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its verse no. 71. Further, verse nos. 72-89 of this Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance of OM as an embodiment of Brahm.

Now let us see what this OM refers to. The word OM is the ethereal divine word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the only and absolute Truth in creation. This word is used as a Mantra or a group of letters combined together to enable the aspirant to symbolically witness the entire spectrum of creation, right from its conception thorough its expansion till its conclusion. The concept of OM has been elaborately described in a separate appendix of this volume.

OM has been treated as the nearest analogue of Brahm which is the only 'truth' in creation and therefore eternal and infinite, because 'truth' has these characteristics. Since the wise aspirant has already become aware that his 'own true self is pure consciousness', and that it is the same as the 'cosmic supreme Consciousness and the universal Truth known as Brahm', he finds a resonance and sync between these two

entities. Truth is always eternal and imperishable as compared to falsehood and delusions. Study of the scriptures as advised in the opening lines of this Upanishad inculcates in him the wisdom about the perishable and deluding nature of this world and the eternal nature of his true self. So naturally he would reject something impermanent and go and investigate something that is permanent. With this aim in view, the aspirant relentlessly pursues his goal of finding it without getting distracted by delusions and false charms of this world. This is indicated by the fact that he constantly remembers Lord Shiva, symbolising his constant awareness of the fact that the life would very soon come to an end.

Now, the word OM has three basic or primal sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. These three are called Matras which literally means the time taken or marked to pronounce a short vowel in the Sanskrit language; it also means a vowel mark. Matra refers to the basic ingredients and their magnitude in any given entity. It also means quantity and intensity of an ingredient. In the case of creation, there are three basic components—its coming into being, its development and expansion, and its conclusion. These three are symbolically represented by the three letters of OM—viz. ‘A’ represents the initiation, ‘U’ the development and expansion, and ‘M’ the conclusion. This is because to say the letter ‘A’, one has to open the mouth, signifying life coming into existence. This is evident from the fact that when the child takes birth, the first thing it does is starting to cry, entailing the opening of the mouth. Or when a man wakes up from sleep, he yawns and utters some incomprehensible monosyllables to indicate that the sleep is over. Similarly, to say ‘U’ one has to cup the lips and the muscles of the tongue are rolled forwards, indicating progress and outgoing nature. Finally, to say ‘M’ one has to close the mouth, indicating the reversal of the process when the mouth was first opened to indicate the initiation of life. That is, M stands for conclusion of life; it symbolises death.

In the present context, this verse is talking about meditation on the divine word OM with the eclectic view point that the first letter of OM, i.e. ‘A’ is Lord Vishnu because he is the Viraat Purush from whom the entire cosmos has evolved. Once the creation comes into being, ‘U’ represents the vast kingdom of Brahma, the patriarch creator of this visible world. A wise and erudite spiritual seeker of the Truth researches this world to find out the truth him, and this he does by meditation and contemplation. For this purpose he invokes Lord Shiva who is represented by the third letter ‘M’ signifying the conclusion of creation, or death. Further, Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics and seekers of truth who have renounced the illusionary charms of this world and taken the strict vows of a monk or a friar. Shiva is worshipped as the Lord who symbolises truth and its beauty, an auspicious way of life full of dispassion and detachment from this material world which has a profound impact upon the whole spiritual well being of the creature, including his peace of mind and blissful heart.

For this purpose of meditation, the spiritual aspirant uses the word OM as a vehicle to concentrate his mind and attention on divinity, truth and the eternal source of peace and tranquility, beatitude and felicity known as Brahm. As to why he chooses OM to do meditation to the exception of all other Mantras, the answer is that if one wishes to study, for example, a specialized branch of advanced molecular biology, then he would buy relevant books, go to a relevant college, here relevant lectures and use relevant knowledge to succeed. It would be highly incredulous and incongruous for him to use physics text book and attend classes on this subject in order to study molecular biology! Likewise, OM is the proper channel, the correct path, the right instrument and the fine-tuned apparatus that can enable him to succeed in Brahm realisation. No other way is as effective and as fruitful as this.

³Let us see the meaning of the symbolism here. Lord Vishnu is depicted as the charioteer here to draw a parallel to his incarnation as Lord Krishna when he had become a charioteer of Arjun during the famous Mahabharat war when the Lord had preached the much acclaimed philosophical treatise known as Gita. Vishnu is regarded as Brahm personified in his macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush, the invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. So, when the spiritual aspirant makes Vishnu his charioteer he is literally leaving his spiritual destiny in the hands of the ultimate Lord himself; he is making the Lord his guide and guardian. This ensures that the aspirant would not be tormented by evil forces because the Lord is now responsible for his protection and welfare.

Form the metaphysical interpretation of OM, making Vishnu the charioteer is like meditating and contemplating upon the first letter 'A' of OM. Since the aspirant has made OM as his vehicle for spiritual journey to Brahm-realisation, he must choose a charioteer who is well versed with the path leading to enlightenment as well as the destination which is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation along with their eternal beatitude and felicity. Lord Vishnu knows this path well because he has created the cosmos and is the supreme Brahm himself. Lord Vishnu takes the aspirant through the journey, showing him all the way side villages and towns represented by the countless experiences and ideas that the aspirant comes across in his lifetime. The charioteer gives him a running commentary of all these places, symbolising the fact that if one listens to the divine voice of the inner self where Vishnu is supposed to reside as one's Atma or consciousness, then the chances of his falling from his chosen devotional path are remote, and the progress of the chariot towards its destination of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation would go on smoothly.

The second letter 'U', as we have seen above, represents the expansion of the creation, indicating that the spiritual aspirant is given a wide choice and shown all the pitfalls that come in the way as well as the horrendous consequences of falling from his spiritual goal and getting distracted by the road-side tricksters and cheated by moral imposters. He would then be trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death, and go back to where he has come so far. When the aspirant relies upon his wisdom cultivated by the study of scriptures, he does not allow himself to be laid astray and fall in the trap of such wayside delusions. This ensures that the chariot progresses smoothly onwards towards its final goal.

The last letter 'M' represents conclusion or death. When a man is face to face with the reality of an imminent death, no amount of worldly enticements of material comforts and sensual pleasures would move him, especially if he sees in that death a chance of eternal liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Such a man would be totally detached from this world, and turn inwards in search of peace and tranquility. This is the culmination of meditation and marked by a perpetual state of Samadhi. This is why such a person worships Lord Shiva who is a living personification of these eclectic virtues and in a perpetual state of Samadhi. The age old adage that 'one becomes what one thinks' is fully applicable here—the aspirant becomes one like these three icons of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, divinity and holiness (i.e. Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva) with whom he constantly keeps company; he inculcates their virtues and ultimately loses his own independent identity, being completely infused, soaked and drenched in their diving glory, completely imbued in their spiritual colour.

⁴Lord Shiva and Rudra are two names of the same divinity, while Shiva and Vishnu are both regarded as manifestations of Brahm, and therefore synonymous with each other and with Brahm—refer Skanda Upanishad which is Chapter 19, and Rudra Hridaya Upanishad which is Chapter 26 of this volume. Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and of those who do meditation. The emphasis in this present Upanishad is on

attaining the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation through the medium of meditation as described in the following verses, and therefore it is appropriate to regard Shiva or Rudra as the patron God who is invoked during the journey to Brahm.]

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, in its verse no. 24 describes OM in the context of Yoga and refers to the 12 Matras of OM. To quote—“This form of Yoga takes some time to yield result like the palm tree that takes some time to bear fruits. It is to be practiced in a systematic manner, and without disruption. [That is, it should be practiced daily, at a fixed time and place, adhering to the number of cycles of Pranayam done daily, and not doing them on a ad-hoc basis or in a fluctuating or erratic manner.]

Similarly, it is prescribed that the time taken to mentally say the twelve ‘Matras’ or letters or elementary sounds of OM¹ should also be maintained and observed religiously. That is, the time taken to say the word OM should always be the same, no matter how many times it is repeated. It should not be done in an irregular, haphazard and erratic manner; it must be ensured that the time taken to say OM is the same each time (24).

[Note—¹The twelve Matras of OM are equivalent to four cycles of saying this word. This is because OM consists of the three basic or primal sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. So, one cycle of three letters multiplied by four such cycles would yield twelve Matras of OM.]”

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, in its verse no. 25 describes OM as a most mysterious form of cosmic Mantra which is as mysterious as the supreme Brahm it stands for. To quote—”This cosmic ethereal sound represented by the divine word OM is so mystical, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious as well as inimitable that it cannot be described in words or mimicked by the body by its own physical efforts. It is not easily perceived by the organ of hearing present in the body (i.e. by the ear) and neither can it be reproduced by the organs of speech or voice of the gross body (i.e. by the tongue and the mouth). It is neither a consonant nor a vowel; it is neither tenor nor bass or baritone sound; it is neither grave and somber nor shrill and light; it is not a moan or a cheerful crackle. It is not a sound that can be copied or mimicked by the throat (as a gurgling, guttural, husky or squeaky sound emanating from the throat; or such sounds as ‘Ha, Ah, Oh’ etc.), palate (as a chuckling, clucking, quacking or chirping sound emanating from the back of the tongue and the roof of the mouth, such as the sound of the alphabets K, Q, S, T etc.), lips (such sounds that require perceptible lip movement such as when pronouncing the letters B, F, M, P, Q, U, V, W and Y etc.) and nose (i.e. the nasal sound of the vowels; sounds resembling a snore, or when one hums a musical note through the nostrils with the mouth closed; a resonating and sonorous sound). It is not also the sound of the ‘R’ which resonates in the head in the cerebrum region and has its origin in the upper part of the hard palate.

The divine ethereal word OM cannot be pronounced or mimicked by the region of the mouth behind the lips where the teeth are located. [That is, none of the sounds generated in the front part of the mouth where the two rows of teeth are located, or even by the rubbing of the teeth against themselves such as gnashing of the teeth in anger or chattering of the teeth when one shivers in severe cold, can resemble, by any stretch of the imagination, the sound emanating from OM.]

‘It’ (i.e. the supreme, transcendental and absolute Truth in creation, known as Brahm and pure cosmic Consciousness, which is at the heart and core of the entire existence, the very cause of all that exists) is the only imperishable and eternal entity that is sublime, divine, holy, eclectic and immaculate, and which does not decay and become extinct. ‘It’ is the entity referred to by the divine word OM representing the ethereal cosmic sound known as ‘Naad’ that permeates and pervades uniformly throughout the length and breadth of the entire universe much like the all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. [It is like saying that ‘water’ is present throughout the ‘ocean’ or the ‘space’ is present wherever there is the ‘sky’.]

So, OM is regarded as being synonymous with Naad and Brahm (25).

[Note—In other words, the divine word OM is used as a means for meditation and contemplation because of its eternally divine and eclectic value. Anything which is glorious and of a high order itself would impart its own characteristic imprint on things with which it comes in contact. If a man works in perfume factory for instance, his clothes are bound to bear the sweet fragrance even after he has left his work place a long time back; this smell lingers on and sticks to his body and his clothes. An expert doctor always ensures that medicines of the best quality are given to his patient so that the disease is cured rapidly and permanently. Since meditation is a highly evolved form of spiritual exercise, it needs the best medium, and nothing is better than OM in helping the aspirant in concentrating his mind on the supreme transcendental Truth. It is because OM is eternal and imperishable like the Truth.

The idea here is that the practitioner of Yoga should employ the components of sound represented in their entirety by the word OM as a means of focusing his mind during meditation, as well as a means of establishing a unity between his own true pure ‘conscious self’ with the cosmic ‘Supreme Consciousness’ known as Brahm. He should envision the presence of the cosmic Consciousness around him when he uses OM as a Mantra during meditation. He must be convinced and certain that this Mantra he is using is the best representative of Brahm, or the best medium to reach his spiritual destination.]”

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, verse no. 31-32 (of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition) states as follows—“While contemplating upon the five elementary elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky, one should meditate on one or more ‘Matras’ or basic, primal sounds that constitute the texture of the cosmic fabric revealed in the form of the ethereal divine word OM representing the entire creation in its nascent and primary form. It is from OM symbolising these basic elements that the rest of the visible and invisible creation has evolved. The meditation should start from the grossest and heaviest of the five elements because it represents the physical ‘earth’ upon which we live, which needs no other proof of its existence besides its own visibility and the physical support it gives the entire visible creation, and which is the easiest element to visualise and focus one’s attention on. The meditation then progresses gradually to higher level, and the five elements are meditated upon depending upon their subtlety and sublimity, with the most sublime and subtle of them being meditated at the last because of the difficulty of its accessibility. [It is like the case of the student first learning about the world in class one through visual pictures, and slowly and in due course of time graduates to become a great scientist or philosopher who would show others the way instead of learning about it himself!]

So, while contemplating upon the 'earth' element, one should meditate on all the five sound forms or syllables¹ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'water' element, one should meditate on the four sound forms or syllables² that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'fire or energy' element, one should meditate on the three sound forms or syllables³ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'air or wind' element, one should meditate on the two sound forms or syllables⁴ that constitute the word OM (31); and while contemplating upon the 'sky or space' element, one should meditate on the one sound form or monosyllable⁵ that constitute the word OM.

Finally, while contemplating upon the ultimate Truth represented by Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is invisible, imperceptible, attributeless, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, immanent, all-encompassing and all-pervading element in creation, one should meditate on only the half syllable⁶ which has no distinctive sound, no special form, no definable characteristic or attribute, and no other existence except as pure cosmic Consciousness.

A wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic regards his body as the habitat of all the five elements of creation. He visualises that his body is the microcosmic cosmos, with the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements lying at the bottom (i.e. in his leg region) and the subtlest and the lightest at the top (i.e. in his head region), while the rest of the elements occupying the space in between depending upon their grossness or subtlety. Thus, he starts his meditation at the bottom, i.e. in his toes, focusing his attention at the tip of the toes and consciously feeling the presence of life and vitality in this part of the body. Then he gradually shifts his attention from down upwards till he reaches the top of the head in a progressive manner.

In other words, for the purposes of meditation, he visualises that the 'earth' element is present in his body from the tip of the toes to the knees, the 'water' element from the knees to the hip region, the 'fire' element from the hip to the heart region (i.e. in the area of the abdomen), the 'air' element in the region from the chest to the area of the nostrils, and the 'sky' element in the top of the head. Finally, when he has reached this stage, he would have automatically become self-realised and enlightened. Then he would no longer need a prop or support in his meditation, and would hear the cosmic sound of ether reverberating in his head. This sound called 'Naad' has no definition and characterizations, and therefore it is regarded as a 'half-syllable' or just an indication of the presence of consciousness that can be felt and experienced and witnessed, but not represented by any of the known letters or syllables. It is the fundamental and primordial sound that existed even before the first trace of creation had even been imagined or visualised.

This most evolved form of meditation and contemplation helps the ascetic to gain authority over all the elements in creation. [And since the body is a product of these five elements, it naturally follows that he is able to exercise full control over his body.] (32). [31-32.]

[Note—¹The five Matras of OM are the following—A, O, U, M and the humming sound produced when the mouth is finally closed after the final letter M has been pronounced. This last sound resembles the reverberation heard when there is a distant explosion, indicating the ripples formed in the cosmic ether immediately after the first 'Big Bang' or cosmic explosion. From the metaphysical perspective, it was the first step taken by the supreme Brahm to initiate creation. These first ripples formed waves on the surface of

this otherwise calm surface of the cosmic ether which overlapped each other as they moved forward from the central core of the cosmic explosion. The result was the generation of huge cosmic waves, the like of which are witnessed in the stormy ocean, and these waves produced 'sound' as they rolled on from their point of origin. This sound is conceptualised as OM. The cosmic debris and stupendous energy generated by the combined effect of the explosion and these waves resulted in the formation of the rest of the elements, and these elements formed the building blocks of the creation as we know it today.

²The four Matras make the entity a wee bit lighter and subtler than that with five Matras. This is a metaphoric way of saying that it symbolises the next lighter form of creation, or the form that is a bit less gross and a bit more subtle than the one with the full load of five Matras. If the five Matras are represented by the earth element, which is the heaviest of the five elements in creation, then the one slightly lighter and less dense than earth is 'water' element. Hence, while meditating upon the water element, the ascetic should focus his attention on the mental repetition of these four letters of OM, which are A, O, U and M, and consciously visualise the presence of consciousness in the region of the body from the knee to the hip region. That is why urine is formed in the lower part of the abdomen, and when one remains standing for long periods of time, the legs swell due to accumulation of bodily water in them.

³The three Matras of OM are the basic, primal sounds of A, U and M. Applying the same logic as described in paragraph 2 above of this note, this is symbolic of an element which is lighter and subtler than water. Such an entity is the 'fire' element. It is present in the abdomen region, and that is why food eaten is digested here just like it is being cooked in an oven. So, while moving the focus of this attention from the hip region upwards towards throat, the ascetic should imagine the fire element as burning inside him and contemplate upon these three primary sounds that constitute OM. The three Matras of OM are indicative of three dynamic forces of creation called 'Brahmi' related to Brahma the creator, 'Raudri' related to Rudra the concluder of creation, and 'Vaishnavi' related to Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 86.

⁴The two Matras of OM are the two forms of sound produced by pronouncing the twin letters A and U together, and then U and M together. This is the second most subtle and lightest element in creation, and is known as the 'air or wind' element. It would be noted that when either of these twin letters are pronounced, a resonating sound is created, much like the rumbling of a plane taking off or landing in a distant respectively. The first two letters A and U = AU symbolise the taking off of the plane or the unfolding of the creation, and the second group of letters U and M = UM sound like the plane is landing, symbolising the conclusion or resting of the creation. These two Matras represent the 'sky or space' elements as it is in the space of the sky that all other elements had emerged in the beginning. This is because an open space is needed for anything to raise its head and stand up to make its presence felt; nothing can grow and develop in the confines of a closed space. Thus, while moving his focus of attention higher from the heart region to the forehead region (or the area around the eyebrows), the ascetic should concentrate upon these two Matras of OM as representing the consciousness present in his body.

⁵The single Matra of OM is the monosyllable word itself. This happens when the meditation has reached its climax, and the ascetic has submerged himself in the cosmic Naad so much so that he literally drowns in its ethereal waves, and the cosmic reverberation of OM overwhelms his consciousness. Even as a man submerged in the water of the ocean loses his sense of distinction of anything pertaining to the external world, because he does not hear any of the genres of sound that have their existence above the surface of the ocean but hears only the sounds inherently present in the water

of the ocean, an ascetic who has finally submerged himself in the overwhelming sound of the cosmic Naad (the cosmic ethereal sound that is present in the background of this visible creation) and has tasted its blissfulness in his mind, he does not care about any formalities, and the only thing that he hears is the resonance of the divine cosmic word OM reverberating in his head. This happens in the highest echelons of the body in the area of the head between the forehead and the top of the skull where the 'Brahm-Randhra' is situated.

Thus, the ascetic should contemplate upon OM in its entirety when he has reached this exalted state of existence when he can withdraw his attention from the rest of the body and focus it on the single area of it in the head. Obviously, in this state he would be unaware of the presence of the other parts of the body, and perceive consciousness only in the upper part of the head, i.e. in the region of the Brahm-Randhra. This is the highest form of Yoga, and it brings about a union of the 'self' with the 'cosmic Self'.

It would be pertinent to note here that verse no. 27 of this Upanishad has stated that the realised ascetic's Pran or life forces leave his body through this aperture called the Brahm-Randhra. The reason is clear now—when the resonance of OM reaches a certain peak level, it creates such a crescendo of sound that the skull splits open due to the accumulated sound energy by overlapping sound waves.]”

The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes OM in its verse nos. 2-9, and 69-71½ . To quote—

“Verse no. 2 = Those who are experts in the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm address and recognise him by the monosyllabic word OM. This word OM is known as ‘Akchar’, i.e. something that is imperishable and perpetual. It is also called ‘Akchar’ because it consists of one continuous homogenous sound that rolls out like a rumble of the distant cloud. Upon analysis it is determined that this sound OM consists of three distinct subtle letters (A, U and M), and this analogy is used by these experts to explain the three subtle aspects of that Brahm—viz. its body or form, its habitat or the places where it is deemed to be present, and its planes of existence which are three in number (called the ‘Kaal Traya’) (2).

“Verse no. 3 = This ethereal and eternal word OM has three Devtas (patron deities)¹, incorporates the three worlds², symbolises the three Vedas³, and has the three forms of the legendary fire element⁴ in it in a latent form. These three letters represent Shiva—one who is auspicious and truthful, is most enlightened, wise and erudite, and is most exalted and pure in nature. Besides these three letters, the complete word OM has a half-syllable called ‘Ardha Matra’ consisting of the ‘Anuswar’ or the dot put on the top of the symbol of OM⁵ (3).

[Note—¹The three Devtas are the personification of the three primary forces of Nature—viz. the Fire God, the Water God, and the Wind God.

²The three worlds are symbolised by the three primary words uttered by the creator Brahma at the time of creation—viz. ‘Bhu’ or the terrestrial world, ‘Bhuvaha’ or the sky, and ‘Swaha’ or the heavens. Another interpretation can be the three worlds such as the heavens, the earth and the nether world.

³The three Vedas are the Rig, Sam and Yajur.

⁴The three fires are the Garhapatya or the fire of the household hearth, the Dakshinagni or the fire lit as a witness to charities and donations and other auspicious deeds, and Ahavaniya or the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods.

⁵In Sanskrit, the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to produce the nasal sound is called an 'Ardha Maatraa'. It is pronounced as 'sum' depending upon the word. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 17.]

“Verse no. 4 = Those who are experts in the eclectic knowledge of Brahm have proclaimed and asserted that the symbolic body of the first letter ‘A’ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Rig Veda, the sacred fire called Garhapatya Agni (fire of the household hearth), the Prithivi (earth) element, and Brahma (the creator of the visible world) (4).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘A’ is the first letter of the alphabet and the first basic short vowel sound. It forms the base for pronunciation of all consonants. It sounds similar to the sound of ‘o’ in the word ‘son’, or the first vowel ‘A’ of the English alphabet and used to denote a single entity or as an article in English grammar—e.g. ‘a’ man. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter forms the base from which the entire creation has sprung forth. This is drawn from the fact that it is the basic and first sound that emanates from the throat when a person attempts to begin to speak. It symbolically therefore stands for the initiation phase of creation.]

“Verse no. 5 = The second letter ‘U’ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Yajur Veda, the sacred fire called Dakshinagni (fire lit as a witness to some charitable deed such as giving of donation or alms), the Akash (sky) element, and Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of the visible world) (5).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘U’ is the fifth letter of the alphabet and third short vowel sound. It is sounded as in the word ‘full’. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter stands for the expansion, development and growth of the creation. It is pronounced by cupping the lips in a spout mode, indicating the spewing of the vital spark of life to as long a distance as possible just like a water-syringe is used to sprinkle liquid over a large area. When a full-throated ‘U’ is sounded as in the case of an expression of utter astonishment or excitement, or as an exclamation made in immense shock or horror, its sound is heard at a long distance, symbolising the fact that the point of origin of this sound has affected a point far away from it. It is different from the guttural sound which cannot be heard from afar.]

“Verse no. 6 = The third letter ‘M’ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Sam Veda, the sacred fire called Ahavaniya (the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods), the Duo Loka (the heavens and far reaches of the deep space), and the supreme Lord called Ishwar (referring to the Supreme Being) (6).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘M’ is the twenty fifth consonant and the fifth one in the fifth category of consonants headed by the letter ‘Pa’. It is the labial nasal, and sounded as ‘ma’ in mother. This class of Sanskrit alphabets is pronounced by snapping the lips open (e.g. when we say any word beginning with ‘P’, our lips have to be opened with a snap). In metaphysical terms, the letter ‘M’ stands for the conclusion of the creation because when we pronounce the word OM, the mouth is finally closed and the lips shut. This is

akin to the state of sleep when one closes one's mouth, or the state of dissolution when one has no awareness of the existence of the external world. This 'death like' state is when the entire creation dissolves and merges into its primary form, the invisible and attributeless Brahm from it has sprung forth when the first rumblings of life and activity were symbolised by the appearance of the word 'A'.]

“Verse no. 7-8 = The letter 'A' is symbolically present in the center or core of the splendorous area that surrounds the celestial Sun. The letter 'U' is similarly located in the center or core of the brightly illuminated area that surrounds the celestial Moon. And the letter 'M' is present in the terrestrial fire that has no smoke (i.e. the fire which is burning brightly) as well as in the fire that is at the heart of the electric or lightening in the sky (i.e. as the stupendous fire element inherently present in electric, enabling the latter to burn anything to ashes in an instant).

Hence, these three letters or syllables should be regarded as being equivalent in their mystical powers and dynamism to the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (7-8).

[Note—The symbolism is very remarkable here. The sun is the harbinger of life on the planet—it provides rains, light, heat and energy. As soon as the sun rises in the morning there is activity and signs of life everywhere, the animals and birds start calling and the man wakes up and normal life with all its accompanying cacophony springs back to life after the sleep of the previous night. This is like the initiating of the new phase or dawn of life by the pronouncement of the letter 'A' by Brahm. Besides this, the Upanishads have uniformly described the Sun God as a visible manifestation of Brahm.

Next comes the Moon and the letter 'U'. The Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, the emotional and sentimental behaviour of a man; he controls the heart and the mind. The moon shines during the night, the period when one makes love to his partner and indulges in the activity of procreation. The letter 'U' stands for expansion of creation, and therefore this procreative activity done during the aegis of the benevolent Moon God is symbolised by saying that this letter is at the core of the moon.

Finally, the letter 'M' stands for conclusion—an obvious allusion to the destructive and ruinous character of the fire element. The lightening and electric are more potent and powerful manifestation of this basic character of the fire to destroy and reduce everything to ashes. The fire without smoke also refers to the fire that is at its ferocious worst, for a smoldering fire would not burn things as easily as the brilliantly lit fire.]

“Verse no. 9 = Just like a leaping flame of a fire or an erect flame of a lighted lamp is always located on the upper side of it and faces or moves upwards (instead of downwards), one should understand that the half-syllable (represented by the 'Anuswar') is always placed on the top of Pranav (the word for OM representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm) (9).

[Note—The 'Anuswar' (◌ं) is the after sound represented by a dot placed on the top of Sanskrit letter to produce the nasal sound of 'Um' as in the word 'sum', or as 'Ang' as in 'sung'. It always belongs to a preceding vowel. In the present case of OM, it belongs to the preceding vowel sound 'A' which stands for the initiator of creative cycle, i.e. the supreme Brahm. Hence it refers to the 'Ishwar', the Lord God called also as Pranav. When the word OM is sounded in the mind, a resonating effect is produced in the region of the forehead around the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. This is the symbolic location of the third eye of wisdom, and wisdom and enlightenment are like fire in the sense that they remove the darkness of ignorance and burn all impurities of the mind much like the fire doing the same thing in the physical world.]”

“Verse no. 69-70 = In the beginning, the aspirant should practice the Mudra (meditative posture) called ‘Bandha’¹”.

The fire element has three subtle forms and three symbolic locations in the body. Thus, the fire element in the first letter ‘A’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the tip of the nose and in both the eyes. The fire element in the second letter ‘U’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the heart. And finally, the fire element in the third letter ‘M’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the middle of the two eyebrows.

The energy and vitality, the strength and stamina of the Pran Shakti or the vital winds present in the body should be injected in these fire elements. [It is like igniting the latent and dormant fire element that is inherently present inside the body at these three symbolic sites where the fire pit of the sacred fire sacrifice that is being symbolically done by the medium of Yoga as mentioned in verse no. 54 is located by blowing air or vital wind into it.]

The Brahm Granthi (the knot or specific site where Brahm is said to have his seat) is said to be located in the region at the tip of the nose as well as in the eyes. Similarly, the Vishnu Granthi (where Vishnu is said to have his base) is located in the subtle heart² (69-70).

[Note—¹The Bandha Mudra pertains to the Baddha Aasan. It is described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 40. It is literally a closed or tied form of Padmasan when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture, the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually ‘bound or tied’ to each other. That is why it is called ‘Baddha’ or tied or closed form of Padmasan.]

²The word Granthi means a node, a nodule or module or knot. It also symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. The Granthis mentioned in this Upanishad should be seen in this context. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation.

Brahm is synonym of Gyan which is knowledge of the truth and possession of the highest degree of erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom. Since these are the functions of the brain located in the head, the seat of Brahm in the Brahm Granthi is said to be here. Knowledge helps to remove the darkness of ignorance, i.e. it is like symbolic opening of the eyes so that the man can see the truth the light of enlightenment and wisdom. Therefore the eyes are also the locations of Brahm Granthi.

In the same vein, Vishnu is the sustainer, protector and nourisher of the world. Compassion, graciousness, love, mercy, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness etc. are some of the eclectic virtues that must be present in a person who is responsible or charged with looking after a huge and extended family which consists of all sorts of members. Since these virtues are the functions of the heart, Vishnu’s seat or Vishnu Granthi is located here.]

“Verse nos. 71 ½ = The Rudra Granthi (the symbolic site of Lord Shiva) is said to be in the central point or tri-junction of the root of the nose and the eyebrows¹. All these three Granthis (Brahm, Vishnu and Rudra Granthis) are ruptured or broken by the help of the ‘Akchar Vayu’, the eternal, imperishable, infinitely powerful and invincible wind or air element².

The creator Brahma has his symbolic abode in the letter ‘A’ of the divine and ethereal word OM. Similarly, the sustainer and protector of creation Vishnu has his symbolic abode in the letter ‘U’, and the concluder Shiva in the letter ‘M’. Beyond them is the supreme Brahm (who is present in the word OM formed by all these individual letters and thus incorporates all of them in his self)³. [Refer verse nos. 4-6 of this Upanishad.]

[Note—¹The word ‘Rudra’ implies anger and wrathfulness. When one becomes angry, the site where Rudra Granthi is located becomes furrowed or crooked or cocked as one frowns and cocks his eyebrows in annoyance and anger. Rudra is one of the forms of Lord Shiva’s form which is synonymous with anger.

²This can be imagined in physical terms also. The constant repetition of the Mantra ‘So-a-Ham’ generates high vibrations in the subtle wind element present inside the body so as to activate it. The energy of these vibrations then focuses the activated air during meditation on these knot-like Granthis much like a high velocity jet of gases that are so powerful that they help to lift a heavy rocket from the ground. This jet of vital airs present in the body strike these Granthis violently, unstucking them from their moorings and cracking them open.]”

The *Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 20 elaborately describes how to do former worship with the Mantra OM. To quote—

“Verse no. 20 = [In this verse, the due process of invoking the Divinity by way of doing ‘Shadanga Nyas’* and ‘Anga Nyas’** of the Mantras is being elaborately described.]

‘OM’—this is one ‘Maha Vakya’ or the first great saying, the first maxim and axiom of the Vedas¹. The Rishi² of this Mantra is known as Hans (literally meaning a divine Swan, but used as an epithet to describe the sage who was most wise and enlightened amongst his peers so much so that he selected this monosyllable Mantra from amongst the numerous group of words and syllables available to holistically describe that entity which is supreme and transcendental Truth in creation). The Chanda³ is Gayatri⁴; the Devta⁵ is Paramhans (the supremely enlightened Divinity); the Beej⁶ is ‘Hum’ or ‘Hung’ (pronounced as sum, or sung); the Shakti⁷ is ‘Saha’; and the Kilak⁸ is ‘So-a-ham’ (i.e. ‘that is me’, implying that the aspirant who has understood the real essence of this Mantra and its spiritual import exults in the ecstasy of self-realisation when he realises that he is the entity to which this Mantra OM is referring, and it is the supreme Truth known the transcendental Brahm).

In order to successfully obtain access to the supreme transcendental Being who is the patron deity of this great Mantra (OM), the deity known as and honoured by the epithet ‘Paramhans’, I am now describing the process by which this Mantra should be invoked in a ritualistic manner so that desired mystical results are obtained, a process called ‘Viniyog’ (literally meaning a humble and prayerful invocation of the patron God and establishing a union between the individual aspirant and this Divinity).

The aspirant should first touch the thumb (with the closed fingers) and say with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is eternally truthful, an embodiment of Gyan (truthful knowledge and enlightenment), and without an end. I invoke him and establish him in my thumb along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Namaha⁹.'

Next, he should touch the first finger with the thumb and say with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my first finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Swaha¹⁰.' [The use of the word 'Swaha' indicates that the aspirant is mentally performing a fire sacrifice.]

The second finger is next touched by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is eternally and perpetually blissful and full of felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my second finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Vaushat¹¹.'

Next, the third finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured by the title of 'Bhuma¹²'. I invoke him and establish him in my third finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Hum¹³.'

The fourth finger is touched next by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is even the Lord of this Bhuma. [Here the reference is made to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the Lord of all that exists and from whom even the Viraat Purush, the Bhuma, has emerged or evolved.] I invoke him and establish him in my fourth finger along with his astounding divine powers and potentials. Vaushat.'

The palm and the opposite side of it should then be touched by the opposite hand and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is one and non-dual, who is unique and without a second. I invoke him and establish him in my palms and hand along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Phat¹⁴.'

Next, the heart should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is Satya (the truthful Being; the personification of Truth), an embodiment of Gyan (knowledge and enlightenment), and Anant (without an end). I invoke him and establish him in my heart along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Namaha.'

Next, the head should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal beatitude and felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my head along with his astounding divine powers and potentials. Swaha.'

Next, the 'Shikha' (the tuft of hair on the top of the head on the crest of the cranium) should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal beatitude and felicity. Brahm is perpetually and infinitely blissful. I invoke him and establish him in my Shikha along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Vaushat.'

Next, the two shoulders should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured by the epithet of 'Bhuma' (one who is vast and colossus; the Viraat Purush) and revered as such. Hum.'

Next, the two eyes should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured and revered as the Lord of the one who is known as 'Bhuma' (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm). Vaushat.'

Next, the right hand should be raised and moved in the air above the head in a circle, brought down and a light clap is made by striking it against the left palm. While doing so, the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is one of his kind and non-dual. He is unique and matchless in this creation. Let him protect me like a shield around my body. Phat.'

Let this supreme transcendental and almighty Brahm protect me from all the directions represented by the words 'Bhu' meaning the terrestrial world and the mortal creatures living in it, 'Bhurvaha' meaning the sky in which the creatures that fly live, and the 'Swaha' meaning the upper heavens where the Stars and the Gods reside.

This last invocation also refers to the aspirant's acknowledgement of the fact that the supreme Brahm is present in all the three aspects of creation—the mortal gross world represented by the earth (Bhu), the subtle but visible world represented by the sky (Bhuvaha), and the subtlest and invisible world represented by the heavens (Swaha).' (20).

[Note—*The concept of Shadang Nyas in the context of Vedic hymns or Mantras refer to the six limbs or basic divisions into which any given classical phrase, such as the Mantra, is broken or divided into for the purpose of study. These six divisions are the Rishi of the Mantra, i.e. the sage who had first visualised it in his mind and proved its efficacy, the Chanda which the classical style in which it is composed, the Devta or deity to whom it is dedicated, the Beej, literally the seed or syllable which is the basic, primal sound form from which the Mantra has sprouted much like a tall tree having its origin in the humble 'seed', the Shakti or the divine and holy powers that the particular Mantra possesses, and the Kilak or the peg which helps it to be established in the body or the mystical worship instrument used during occult practices to invoke the supernatural powers of this Mantra.

** Anga Nyas is the process of ritual worship by which certain fixed points in the body are designated where the chosen deity is mentally invoked through the specific Mantra. This envisions that the mystical divine powers of the patron God or deity being worshipped by the Mantra are mentally invested in these fixed cardinal points of the body, thereby empowering the aspirant with their stupendous potentials as well as symbolically assigning the body to the tutelary God or deity to whom the particular Mantra belongs for his protection and blessing. Usually these six cardinal points are the following—the two legs, two hands, one head and one waist region. But according to this verse, they are the thumb, the tip of the fingers, the heart, the shoulders, the tuft on the top of the head, and the palm of the hand. There are prescribed ways of invoking the Mantras, and when done in a proper way it empowers the ordinary body of the worshipper with extraordinary divine and mystical powers.

Therefore, process of doing Anga Nyas is to symbolically establish the Mantra's divine mystical powers in the worshipper's own body and make it holy, auspicious, sanctified and empowered. The deity being worshipped is symbolically requested to

come and take his seat in the body, thereby ensuring that the worshipper is getting constant protection from this godhead. In the present context, since the Maha Vakya speak of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the latter's invocation and seating in the worshipper's body would ensure that he becomes a versatile personification of Brahm. He is literally transformed from being an ordinary human being to an exalted being who is as revered and honourable as Brahm as well as a living embodiment of Brahm. Herein lies the importance of having firm faith in these Maha Vakya because assuming the mantle of Brahm is not an easy task. The worshipper is expected to live up to his responsibilities as Brahm personified!

¹The concept of OM has been elaborately described in a separate appendix of this volume.

²The Rishi of the Mantra is the sage who had first conceived or visualised it in his mind and proved its efficacy, and who is remembered first in order to pay homage to his memory and seek his blessings.

³The Chanda is the classical style in which a particular hymn or great saying is composed.

⁴The Gayatri is a special type of poetical composition having twenty four letters or syllables divided into three lines or steps or stanzas.

⁵The Devta or God is the patron deity to whom the particular Mantra is dedicated.

⁶The Beej, literally the seed, is the syllable which is the basic and primal sound-form from which the Mantra has sprouted much like a tall tree having its origin in the humble 'seed'.

⁷The Shakti is the divine and holy powers that the particular Mantra possesses. It refers to the Mantra's dynamic energy that is subtly present in it in a coded form. Proper use of the Mantra helps to de-code this energy and unleash or activate it.

⁸The Kilak is the peg which helps a Mantra to be established in the body of the worshipper of that Mantra, or to the mystical worship instrument used during occult practices to invoke the supernatural powers of this Mantra and invest this instrument with these divine and mystical powers. It is like a nail to fix the Mantra at the designated point in the body.

⁹The word Namaha is used as a submissive word used to show supplication, great honour and respect to the deity adored by the worshipper. It literally means 'I most reverentially and devotedly bow to you.'

¹⁰The word Swaha is pronounced at the time of offering oblations to the holy fire during a fire sacrifice. It is said that when this word is said, the Fire God accepts the offering on behalf of the patron God for whom it is meant.

¹¹The word Vaushat refers to the symbolic second leg on which the formal fire sacrifice is based, the other leg being Swaha. Thus, they are often used to mean the same thing, and refer to the oblation offered to the patron deity or God who is being worshipped by the means of the fire sacrifice (Taittiriye Sanghita 7/5/5/3). That is why Vaushat is also related to the Vaishwanar Agni (the all-pervading subtle fire element in the cosmos) (Maitrayani Brahmin, 4/6/7) and the Sun God (Shatpath Brahmin, 1/7/2/11).

¹²The word Bhuma literally means the one who is vast and colossus as the visible world of which he is the undisputed Lord. It refers to the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic gross body of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and from whom the rest of the visible creation has evolved.

¹³The word Hum refers to the sanctified food that is kept aside during a formal fire sacrifice and is meant for human consumption as sanctified food. In ancient times, householders used to keep aside some food, equivalent in quantity to sixteen eggs of the peacock, to be offered to guests or mendicants. This formed the symbolic third leg of the formal fire sacrifice.

¹⁴The word Phat refers to the sound of clap made by striking the two palms together. It is one of the practices observed during formal occult worship.]

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 6 describes OM in the following words—

“Verse no. 6 = The three subtle letters of OM (i.e. A, U and M) are like the three mouths of the Vedas (i.e. they represent the three primary Vedas, the Rig, Sam and Yajur, embodying holistic knowledge about all aspects of creation). These three components of OM represent all the three Gunas in creation (i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and Tama Guna which determine the basic character and nature of all living beings in creation).

OM, being ethereal, invisible, sublime and subtle in nature, has no definitive forms, no specific definitions, and no distinctive attributes and characteristics that can ever define or characterize it.

It is steady and uniform; it is without any faults, shortcomings and taints of any kind related to this worldly existence; and it has no support for itself because it is self-supporting and self-sustaining (6).

[Note—As it would be observed here, the ethereal word OM representing the entity that is supreme transcendental and cosmic Divinity personified, and which is known by the other synonym of Brahm or Pranav, has such virtues that appear to be contradictory to each other, making OM and its principal subject, the Brahm, so very abstract, enigmatic and esoteric that it becomes a subject beyond the comprehension by logic and rationality of the intelligence-based thinking process of the mind, making it virtually impossible to be grasped and understood. So the only way to witness the truthfulness of its existence and supernatural powers is to personally experience its all-pervasive presence, and this is achieved by meditation and contemplation, and not by indulging in endless debates and trying to arrive at the truth by too literal an interpretation of the various scriptures which is devoid of their practical implications, because they would only add to confusions rather than removing them. This irrefutable fact has been asserted in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 8. The mysterious nature of Brahm has been expounded in this Upanishad in its four Cantos, 3-6. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad, in its verse nos. 3-9, 71-74 very brilliantly describes the components of OM.]

The *Mandukya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 8-12 describe the four aspects of aspects of creation in relation to the three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M, and the complete word known as ‘OM’. To quote—

“Verse no. 8 = That transcendental cosmic all-inclusive and all-pervading Brahm, and its counterpart in the form of this individual creature’s Atma are both in the form of the Akshar OM. [The word ‘Akshar’ literally means something that does not decay and is imperishable. It also means a letter of the alphabet. Since OM is an ethereal word representing both the supreme Brahm and the pure conscious Atma, both of which are eternal and imperishable entities, it is called ‘Akshar’. Since it is a monosyllabic word pronounced in one single breath as OM (as in roam), it is equivalent to one letter inspite of the fact that it actually consists of three independent letters A, U and M.]

(Like in the case of Brahm and the Atma having different steps as narrated in verse nos. 3-7 above—) This OM has three steps or letters that constitute its body. They are not separable from OM and from each other. In other words, they merge seamlessly

in one another. It is not possible to have OM devoid of any one of its units (just like it is not possible to separate the Atma from Brahm, or the world from either of them).

These three aspects or constituent parts of OM are the letters or Akshars 'A', 'U' and 'M'. [The combined word that is formed is A + U + M = Aum or OM as in roam.] (8).

“Verse no. 9 = [Verse nos. 9-11 describe the three aspects of OM corresponding to the three ‘Paads’ or aspects of creation—viz. initiation, development and conclusion which are called the Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya respectively, and are equivalent to the Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming) and Sushupta (deep sleep state) of existence. Finally, verse no. 12 describes that state of existence that transcends these three states and is called Turiya. It is likened to the closing of the mouth after the word OM is pronounced. This last is the fourth Paad or aspect of OM.]

The first ‘Paad’ or aspect or leg of OM corresponding to the first letter ‘A’ of the ethereal word OM is the Vaishwanar form of Brahm and the Atma that is the primary cause of creation of this visible world, and is therefore equivalent to the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness (as described in verse no. 3). [It is this waking state when the creature is aware of the world around him. He can physically interact with this world. Since this state of consciousness is the initiator and progenitor of this ‘Vishwa’ or this visible world, it is like the first letter ‘A’ of the series of alphabets because it is the basic vowel sound upon which all other sounds are based and which precedes all the other alphabets. When one starts counting the alphabets, he starts with the first letter ‘A’. Hence, for all practical purposes, ‘A’ is the foundation upon which the entire edifice of alphabets, and as a natural corollary, the whole language rests because the language is based on words made up of alphabets. Similarly, the whole edifice of this creation rests upon the first letter or syllable ‘A’ of the word OM standing for Brahm.]

A man who is acquainted with this fact is regarded as wise and learned, and consequentially he gets respect and honour in this world and is able to fulfill all his desires and wishes. [Since all desires and wishes are fulfilled in this visible, physical world by taking relevant actions and doing necessary deeds, which in turn require diligent efforts and involvement of the various faculties of the physical body, along with faith, devotion and sincerity of purpose for the job at hand, as well as the acquisition of corresponding skills and having relevant knowledge of the world, this waking state enables the man to achieve success in fulfilling his desires and wishes. A man who has attained success would naturally find respect in society.] (9).

[Note—It must be noted here that the entire gamut of creation, right from its initiation through its development and till its conclusion, is visualised as being represented in the three letters of OM. This visualization is based on the premise that the word OM is a complete symbolic representation of Brahm in its entirety. Since the creation is a revelation of Brahm, it follows that it is also a revelation of OM. Therefore, the three constituent letters of OM, viz. A, U and M, represent the three phases of existence—viz. the Jagrat, the Swapna and the Sushupta as explained in verse no. 9, 10 and 11 respectively.]

“Verse no. 10 = The second ‘Paad’ or aspect or leg of OM corresponding to the second letter ‘U’ of the ethereal word OM is the Taijas form of Brahm and the Atma that is equivalent to the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness. This dreaming

state is in between the Jagrat or waking state and the Sushupta or deep sleep state. Hence it forms the middle part of OM. Just like a man can dream things much beyond what is actually possible in the practical life of the waking state, or it is in this dreaming state that his imaginations can stretch to infinity, it is the second state of creation in which the already initiated world (of the first state as narrated in verse no. 9) develops, grows and blossoms in infinite varieties of shapes, colours and forms. It represents growth, development and expansion.

A man who is acquainted with this fact is regarded as wise and learned, and he always remains calm and unruffled. He has equanimity of demeanour and treats everything and everyone equally without any discrimination. [Since he is wise and enlightened about Brahm and the reality of this world, his behaviour, outlook and temperament would reflect his exalted mental state. Since he would have realised that whatever that is seen is actually an expansion of Brahm or a revelation of Brahm, he would see no distinction between any two units of creation. He would treat every creature alike, and would be neutral towards everything in this world. For him, pain and suffering as well as joys and happiness are the same; duration of none of them either bothers him or makes him elated or depressed in the least.]

No one in his family remains devoid of the knowledge of Brahm. [Obviously, with such a wise man amidst them, it is natural that those who live with him are bound to be affected by his life, teachings and thoughts. As it is not possible for darkness to exist in the sunlight, it is not possible for ignorance to survive in the vicinity of light of knowledge that such a Brahm-realised man symbolises.] (10).

“Verse no. 11 = The third ‘Paad’ or aspect or leg of OM corresponding to the third letter ‘M’ of the ethereal word OM is the Pragma form of Brahm and the Atma that is equivalent to the Sushupta or deep sleep state of existence of consciousness. This third state of existence of consciousness is equivalent to the conclusion of creation because the mouth has to be closed when one pronounces the letter M (as in come; mum). The ‘closing’ of the mouth is a metaphoric way of saying that the man has concluded or ended what he wished to express. [To think what to speak is equivalent to the first state of initiation of creation, the expression of this thought is like the unfolding, spreading and extension of this creation, and ending the speech by closing the mouth is like the conclusion of creation. Since the mind is the entity that creates this world and expands it, it is the mind that can conclude it too. So, the third letter M of the word OM marks this third phase of conclusion of creation. It is ‘Pragma’ because when a man completes what he wishes to say, it becomes fully known to others what his thought was. It is not possible to know completely what he wants to say either before he starts to speak or during the middle of his speech. Therefore, the conclusion of the word OM symbolically represents not only the conclusion of creation but also the extent and depth of the knowledge that the speaker has.]

A man who knows this secret of OM, who has the depth of wisdom and scale of learning to understand and grasp the great metaphysical import of this knowledge develops the ability of withdrawing everything into himself, or accepting everything as they are, but remaining calm, poised and unruffled. He has virtually dissolved himself into nothingness. [In other words, he stops to be perturbed or disturbed by anything in this world. He becomes calm and rested. He develops an exemplary sense of equanimity

and indifference to everything. He stops to talk unnecessarily and indulge in unnecessary activities. He goes about his duties in this world silently, rarely if ever speaking. He remains perpetually engrossed in contemplation and meditation even while appearing to be doing so many things in this world. Whatever comes his way is accepted by him because he sees Brahm in everything. Thus for all practical purposes, he has become non-existent as a separate individual that is distinct from Brahm. Or in other words, he has dissolved himself into nothingness! In practical terms also, the less a man speaks the more relaxed and energized his mind and body feel. Speaking draws energy from the body and it is an unnecessary distraction for the spirit, creating more vexations than removing them. Going about one's job silently helps one to concentrate all his energy and faculties on it, and the result is all the more better than that obtained when one is incessantly talking nonsense. The faculty of speech is helpful to him to enquire about the correct path to be followed, but once his destination is determined he is well advised to tread it quietly and in solitude of the mind. Such a spiritual aspirant is able to easily and more quickly able to obtain Mukti or liberation and deliverance for himself.] (11).

“Verse no. 12 = The fourth ‘Paad’ or aspect or leg of OM corresponds to the Turiya state of existence. It is that stage when the word OM is completely pronounced and the speaker falls silent. It symbolises that calmed and tranquil aspect of Brahm or Atma that has eliminated all the delusions, doubts and confusions that arise in this material world of sense objects. It is an auspicious state of existence that is non-dual or Advaitya. [Since there is no delusion, doubt or confusion, there is no possibility of the man being torn between two options. He has for instance not to decide what to say or what not to say, what to see and what not to, what to hear and what not to, what to taste and what not to, what to touch and what not to, where to go and where not to, what to accept and what not to etc. In other words, both the gross body of sense organs and the subtle body of the mind become redundant and irrelevant. This is like the man actually reaching his chosen destination when he finally sits down to relax and revitalize himself. It is upon reaching his final destination that he feels accomplished and fulfilled, and is overcome with extreme happiness and joy. It rids him of all the worries about the uncertainties that lay before him, which in turn created consternation and perplexities in his mind till the time he has actually reached his destination and found his final peace. He is finally liberated from all the worries that had been dogging him since time immemorial, and delivered from all the consternations and uncertainties that had been the cause of all his torments. In the spiritual field, he has sort of ‘arrived’ at his destination. He has attained Mukti or Moksha—liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation.]

Perhaps one of the most important Upanishads that deal with the concept of OM is the *Atharvashikha Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition which is entirely dedicated to the theme of divinity of OM. It treats OM as a synonym for Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divinity which is also known as Pranav, and emphasises that spiritual liberation and deliverance is not only easy but only possible by adopting the path of meditation and contemplation on OM to the exclusion of all other paths. To summarise, it describes the four syllables of OM as being equivalent to the four Paads or legs or aspects of creation in its Kankika 1. It goes on to describe the genesis of creation including all the Gods and the Vedas, the colours of these four syllables, their metaphysical importance,

how it helps to control the Prans (the vital winds), and why it is called Pranav which is another name of the supreme Brahm. In its Kandika 2 this Upanishad describes why OM is called Tarak (a provider of deliverance and salvation to the soul), Sarwavyapi (all-pervading and all-inclusive), Pradip (illuminated), Vidyut (radiant and splendorous) and Mahadev (the great God). In Kandika 3 is outlined how the spiritual aspirant can obtain final Mukti or liberation and deliverance by meditating and contemplating upon this single monosyllabic Mantra OM.

Regarding the four states in which the consciousness exists, this Atharvashikha Upanishad describes them in the context of the four syllables of OM as follows--"The first Matra or letter or aspect of OM, i.e. 'A', corresponds to the Jagrat or waking state of existence. The second Matra or letter or aspect of OM, i.e. 'U', corresponds to the Swapna or dreaming state of existence. The third Matra or letter or aspect of OM, i.e. 'M', corresponds to the Sushupta or deep sleep state of existence. The fourth Matra or letter or aspect of OM, i.e. the Ardha Matra, corresponds to the Turiya state of existence which is also called the state of Samadhi, the trance-like state of peace, tranquility, serenity and bliss."

OM and NAAD:

The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 4

The symbolism of assigning colours to the syllables of OM

The symbolic colours of the syllables of OM—The *Atharva-shikha Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the colours of the syllables of OM in its Kandika 1 as follows—“The first Matra of OM, i.e. the letter ‘A’ represents the colour red and yellow. Its patron deity is Brahma, the creator of this visible world.

The second Matra of OM, i.e. the letter ‘U’ represents the dark colour. Its patron deity is the self-illuminated and splendid Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation.

The third Matra of OM, i.e. the letter ‘M’ represents the colour white. Its patron deity is Rudra who is both the auspicious form of Brahm and the annihilator of creation. [Rudra being a dynamic form and a synonym of Brahm has been proclaimed by the Atharvashir Upanishad—this is his auspicious and benevolent form. Rudra is also known as the angry form of Shiva who is responsible for conclusion of creation—this is annihilating role in creation. There is no confusion in this apparent opposite and discordant role because ‘Brahm’ plays all the roles in creation, not only as concluder but even as the creator and sustainer of creation.

The fourth Ardha Matra of OM, i.e. the sound that follows the pronunciation of the third letter ‘M’, represents an admixture of all the colours. Its patron deity is the glorious and majestic Viraat Purush, the all-pervading, all-encompassing invisible form of Brahm that is the macrocosmic gross body of the Supreme Being.

In this way, the ethereal word representing the supreme Divinity has four Paads or aspects symbolised by its four letters or syllables.

The colours of the syllables of OM and the universality of its presence in the form of consciousness have been described in the Sam Veda’s *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse nos. 75-79. Let us see what it says:--

“Verse no. 75 = The gross ‘Viraat Vishwa’ is a manifestation of the letter ‘A’, the radiant and subtle ‘Hiranyagarbh’ represents the letter ‘U’, and the causal, attributeless, enlightened entity Ishwar symbolises the letter ‘M’. The letter ‘A’ has the natural quality called ‘Rajasic’ (desires to enjoy the world, having passions); its colour is red and it

represents the creator of the world, Brahma. The letter 'U' has the quality called 'Satwic' (righteousness, nobility and virtuousness); its colour is white or grey and it represents the sustainer and caretaker of the world called Vishnu (75).

“Verse nos. 76-78 = The letter 'M' has the natural quality called 'Tamsic'; its colour is dark and it stands for the annihilator Rudra. In this way, the origin of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra is deemed to be in OM or 'Pranav' which is the cosmic symbol of the Divine. OM is the transcendental, supreme and primary cause for the origin of all that exists. The creator of the world, Brahma, is deemed to be incorporated and included as an integral part of the letter 'A' (i.e., the letter represents Brahma), Vishnu in the letter 'U' (76-77), and Rudra (Shiva) in the letter 'M'. It is only Pranav/OM that keeps shining brightly and brilliantly everywhere (or it remains visible, manifested or revealed in all its glory and splendour at all the places in its myriad forms) in the cosmos.

This Pranav/OM is said to be facing upwards (i.e. it is uplifting by nature) in wise, erudite, sagacious, adroit and enlightened persons, while it faces down (i.e. is degrading, degenerating and denigrating) in stupid and ignorant people (78).

“Verse no. 79 = It is Pranav/OM that is present everywhere, in every direction in equal intensity and magnitude; it is immanent and omnipresent. A person who realises or understands this as it is, is indeed an adroit person who is an expert in the essential knowledge, tenets and teachings of the Vedas. Amongst enlightened and wise seekers/aspirants, this Pranav/OM is irrevocably, un-hinderingly, consistently and uniformly uplifting for their souls. (79)

OM and NAAD:

The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 5

The Genesis of Creation from the perspective of OM

Let us now examine how the Genesis of Creation from the perspective of OM.

This concept has been described in the *Atharva-shikha Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition in its Kandika 1 in relation with the four syllables of OM.

“Once, sages Pippalaad, Angiras and Sanatkumar approached the great sage Atharvan and asked—‘Oh Lord! Which is the highest form of meditation and contemplation that you have preached? What does it consists of, and what are its four steps? Who is the meditator? What is the object of this meditation or the reward of such meditation?’

Sage Atharvan replied—‘Well, the ethereal word OM representing Pranav or the transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, is always present before even the Vedas symbolising knowledge came into being. It is this OM that should be meditated upon. [Since OM represents Brahm, the supreme Creator and the progenitor of the Vedas, their de-facto parent, it is this reason why OM is always said before recitation of the hymns of the Vedas is commenced. It is a prefix of the hymns and reminds the aspirant of the supreme Brahm who these Vedas refer to and who was existent even before these Vedas came into being. In other words, if the Vedas are revered and honoured then their source, the spring-board from where they originated, i.e. Brahm represented by OM, the sound symbol of Brahm, should be given more respect. This is because OM representing Brahm is like the ‘parent’ of the Vedas. Further, since the hymns of the Vedas are ‘chanted or said’ using letters and words which are spoken by the medium of speech, an aphorism for sound, it follows that OM, the ethereal sound, is a pre-requisite for the revelation of the Vedas.]

All the four Vedas are the four Paads or legs or aspects of OM (Brahm). The first Matra or letter that is equivalent to its first Paad is ‘A’. It represents the Prithivi or the earth. It is from this ‘A’ that the first of the Vedas, i.e. the Rig/Rik Veda and its Richas (hymns) were created. The creator of the visible world, i.e. Lord Brahma (the first of the Trinity Gods)), the different Vasus¹ (asset or wealth that was created in the beginning to sustain life on earth), the Gayatri Chanda² (the first poetical metre in which the hymns of

the Vedas were pronounced), and the sacred fire called the Garhyapatya Agni (the householder's fire) were created.

The second letter 'U' of the ethereal word OM represents the second Paad or leg of Brahm and the second Matra or aspect of OM. It gives rise to the Antariksha (the vast space of the sky above the earth), the Atharva Veda containing the Mantras called Yajus needed to perform the sacrifices during fire sacrifices, Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation (the second of the Trinity Gods), Lord Rudra who is none but the supreme Brahm personified (as affirmed in the Atharvashir Upanishad, and therefore refers to the Viraat Purush whose manifestation is Lord Vishnu)³, the Trishtup Chanda⁴, and the second type of holy fire called the Dakshinagni Agni (the fire lit as a witness to making charities and sacrifices in the holy fire during fire sacrifices).

The third letter 'M' of the ethereal word OM represents the third Paad or leg of Brahm and the third Matra or aspect of OM. It is from this that the following units of creation were created—the Duloka (the heavens), the melodious hymns of the Sam Veda, the brilliant Aditya or the Sun God, the Rudra (that aspect of Brahm which helps to conclude the creation; the third of the Trinity Gods), the Jagati Chanda⁵, and the third holy fire called Ahawaniya (the fire lit to invite the deity to participate in the fire sacrifice).

The fourth Matra of OM is called the 'Ardha Matra' because it is half a syllable, and is placed at the end of the letter 'M' (sound of M) and is a fragmented form of 'M'⁶. It is this aspect of OM from which the Moon God (the Soma Loka), the Atharvan Mantras of the Atharva Veda, the Samvartak Agni (which is the universal fire of destruction), the Maruts⁷ (the winds; the howling wind that blows during the doomsday), the Viraaj/Viraad⁸, and the most brilliant and self-illuminated (like the dazzle of electric).'

[Note—¹The Vasus—There are eight Vasus who are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life—Vishnu who is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the

energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following— Dhruv, Dhar, Som/Soma (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som/Soma which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhaas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

The Ekakchar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 7, says that these Vasus are manifestations of Brahm in order to provide the creation with the necessities of life.

²The Gayatri Chanda—The Chandas are a poetic style in which the verses of the Vedas were composed. The word ‘Chanda’ means —a poetic composition, rhyme, a metre or stanza in poetry, a measure in music, or hymns or psalms of the Vedas.

The Gayatri Chanda has 24 letters and syllables in all which are divided into 3 steps or stanzas of 8 letters or syllables each. Hence the total is $3 \times 8 = 24$.

Amongst the Chandas, the Gayatri Chanda is considered the best and the most ancient because it was in this style that the creator Brahma had first revealed the primary hymns of the Rig and other Vedas. This fact is corroborated by the Gaytri Upanishad which is actually the Atharva Veda’s eight Kandikas (sub-sections), from 31 to 38, of the Gopath Brahman which are collectively known as the Gayatri Upanishad. A famous Mantra dedicated to the Sun God is also called Gayatri Mantra because of the fact that it was the first such Mantra revealed by the creator Brahma in the composition style called Gayatri and became synonymous with it.

³Lord Vishnu and Rudra symbolise two dynamic aspects of Brahm. The former is the sustainer and protector of the visible world that Brahma the creator created, while the latter is the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of the Supreme Being and a sublime form of Vishnu. In fact, Vishnu and the Viraat Purush are usually treated as one deity called by these two names according to the context. The synonymous nature of Rudra and Brahm has been the subject of the entire Atharvashir Upanishad which is Chapter 4 of this volume.

⁴The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; $11 \times 4 = 44$ letters in all.

⁵The Jagati Chanda—is a verse of 4 lines with 12 letters in each line, bringing the total number of letters to 48.

⁶The Ardha Matra refers to a half-syllable. Normally, the letter ‘M’ of the word OM is to be hummed in a prolonged sound stretching into infinity. But since it is not done and the worshipper becomes silent, it is called ‘half Matra’ or half syllable. It is tantamount to conclusion of the word OM, and since OM is envisioned as representing the whole gamut of creation, this Ardha Matra is symbolic of conclusion of creation. That is why it is accompanied by the universal fire of destruction called the Samvartak Agni.

⁷The Maruts are the various names given to the Wind God. There are said to be 49 in number, and are the Wind-Gods mentioned in Rig Veda, 1/37-39 and 1/165/3, 5, 7, 9. They are regarded variously as—(i) sons of Indra and Vrishni (Rig Veda, 2/34/2), (ii) Sons of Rudra (Rig Veda, 2/33/1), (iii) similar to the Fire-God (Rig Veda, 6/66/2), and (vi) Indra God (Rig Veda, 1/165, 171). The Purans call them sons of sage Kashyap and Diti.

⁸The word Viraaj or Viraad has two connotations. One, it refers to the Viraat Chanda which is a verse that has four lines each having ten letters, bringing the number of letters to 40, and two, it means the eldest son of Brahma the creator. If the second connotation is to be considered then the Maruts, the various Wind Gods would deem to be the Viraad.]

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda describes the concept of OM and the genesis of creation in its Canto 1, verse no. 8; Canto 2, verse no. 2, 5; and Canto 4, verse no. 3. Now let us see what it has to say—

“Canto 1, verse no. 8 = “Prajapat Brahma continued—‘One should understand that all the Gods, the various forms of the divine fire, the living beings, the vital winds or airs (called the Prans), the organs of the body (i.e. the five organs of perception and five organs of action, called the Indris), the animals, the food, the Amrit (referring to the liquid that sustains and harbours life, i.e. water), Samraat (literally the Emperor, here referring to the highest form of human beings), Swaraat (Brahma the creator), and Viraat (i.e. the Viraat Purush, Lord Vishnu)—all of them represent the first Paad (or leg or step) of the divine Sam Mantra (i.e. the Anushtup Chanda in which the Mantras of Gayatri such as Pranav or OM, and Laxmi as well as and Nrisingh were revealed).

Similarly, one should understand that the four Vedas such as the Rig/Rik, the Yajur, the Sam and the Atharva, the Sun and the divine Purush living in this Sun represent the second Paad (or leg or step) of the divine Sam Mantra (as described above). [The Sun is regarded as a visible manifestation of the majestic and stupendous glories of the Supreme Being. The external splendorous disc of the Sun is the gross body of this Supreme Being, and the eternal ‘fire’ that burns inside this disc and which empowers the Sun to shine brilliantly, to foster life in this world by its light, heat, warmth and energy, represents the subtle body of the Supreme Being that resides inside this disc. This subtle form is known as the ‘Purush’, the Supreme Being concealed as the dynamic ‘fire’ that lives inside the external body or the disc of the celestial Sun that actually makes the Sun what it is worth. This Supreme Being is the ‘soul’ of the Sun; he is revealed as the eternal ‘fire’ burning inside the Sun; his dynamism is manifested as the light, heat and energy emanating from the Sun. It is this concealed ‘Purush’ or the Supreme Being himself who is being referred to in this stanza.]

Likewise, one should understand that all the medicinal herbs and the Moon, which is the king amongst the stars, represent the third Paad (or leg or step) of the divine Sam Mantra (as described above).

Finally, one should understand that the Trinity Gods consisting of the creator Brahma, the sustainer and protector Vishnu, and the concluder Shiva, along with Indra (the king of Gods) and the imperishable supreme Lord of creation (i.e. Brahm) represent the fourth Paad (or leg or step) of the divine Sam Mantra (as described above).

A person who becomes acquainted with the esoteric meaning and the divine form of the holy Mantra is able to obtain eternity and blessedness (8).

“Canto 2, verse no. 2 = The four limbs of this Anushtup Mantra are like the four syllables or aspects of the divine Mantra of Pranav (Brahm), which is OM. [Refer also Canto 4, verse no. 2-3.]

The first letter of this OM is ‘A’. Its manifested form is the earth; its Veda (revealed knowledge) is the Rig/Rik Veda adorned with (i.e. consisting of) its glorious Richas (hymns); its Devta (deity or patron god) is Brahma; its Ganas (attendants) are the eight Vasus; the Gayatri Chanda is inherent in its sound; and the Garhyapatya Agni is its integral part (i.e. this fire is its inherent strength, dynamism, energy and power, and it is intrinsically present in it). All these units or elements of creation are implied or vested in the first step or leg of Pranav represented by the divine Mantra OM. [In other words, they represent the first leg or aspect of the supreme Brahm.] This first Matra (a letter or syllable) of OM is equivalent to the first Paad (a line or step) of the divine Anushtup Mantra (dedicated to Lord Nrisingh).

The second letter of Pranav (Brahm), represented by the divine Mantra OM, is the letter ‘U’. Its manifested form is the Antariksha (the sky above the earth and the lower heaven); its Veda (revealed knowledge) is the Yajur Veda adorned with (i.e. consisting of) its glorious Mantras (hymns); its Devta (deity or patron god) is Vishnu; its Ganas (attendants) are the eleven Rudras; the Trishtup Chanda is inherent in its sound; and the Dakshinagni is its integral part (i.e. this fire is its inherent strength, dynamism, energy and power, and it is intrinsically present in it). All these units or elements of creation are implied or vested in the second step or leg of Pranav represented by the divine Mantra OM. [In other words, they represent the second leg or aspect of the supreme Brahm.] This second Matra (a letter or syllable) of OM is equivalent to the second Paad (a line or step) of the divine Anushtup Mantra (dedicated to Lord Nrisingh).

The third letter of Pranav (Brahm), represented by the divine Mantra OM, is the letter ‘M’. Its manifested form is the Duloka (the deep space of the higher sky usually referred to as the upper heaven); its Veda (revealed knowledge) is the Sam Veda adorned with (i.e. consisting of) its glorious Sam (hymns); its Devta (deity or patron god) is Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva which brings about the conclusion of creation); its Ganas (attendants) are the twelve Adityas (Suns); the Jagati Chanda is inherent in its sound; and the Ahawaniya Agni is its integral part (i.e. this fire is its inherent strength, dynamism, energy and power, and it is intrinsically present in it). All these units or elements of creation are implied or vested in the third step or leg of Pranav represented by the divine Mantra OM. [In other words, they represent the third leg or aspect of the supreme Brahm.] This third Matra (a letter or syllable) of OM is equivalent to the third Paad (a line or step) of the divine Anushtup Mantra (dedicated to Lord Nrisingh).

The fourth part of Pranav (Brahm), represented by the divine Mantra OM, is the half-syllable called the ‘Ardha Matra’. It is the protracted humming sound of the letter ‘M’ that reverberates at the end of saying OM, and it represents the cosmic ethereal sound called Naad. [This is the sound of ‘dot’ or Anuswar placed on the top of a Sanskrit letter to sound like ‘mum’ with a protracted humming of the second ‘m’.] Its manifested form is the Som Loka (the Moon which is regarded as a pitcher of elixir in the heaven); its Veda (revealed knowledge) is the Atharva Veda adorned with (i.e. consisting of) its glorious Mantras (hymns); its Devta (deity or patron god) is the supreme transcendental Brahm (who is the primary cause of coming into being the entire creation, including the

Trinity Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva); its Ganas (attendants) are the forty-nine Maruts; the Virat Chanda is inherent in its sound; and the Samvartak Agni is its integral part (i.e. this fire is its inherent strength, dynamism, energy and power, and it is intrinsically present in it).

There is only one Rishi (or seer who had first seen or to whom this Mantra was first revealed during deep meditation) of this most divine and eclectic Mantra. [This Rishi is the creator Brahma.]

The fourth Matra or the cosmic Naad that is heard at the end of pronouncing the Mantra OM is most glorious, magnificent, eclectic and divine, it is splendourous and illuminating, and it represents the supreme transcendental Brahm himself. [That is, when the aspirant actually gets deeply submerged in meditation, he experiences the presence of the eternal fount of bliss and ecstasy in his own inner self. He experiences the blessedness of self-realisation which illuminates his inner being, and he becomes enlightened. This is the state of Brahm-realisation; the state of extreme blessedness when beatitude and felicity is witnessed first hand, and this is tantamount to having reached Brahm. The humming sound of OM completely overwhelms the aspirant and massages his nerves so much so that all his worldly worries, pains, agonies and sorrows are eliminated. This is equivalent to becoming liberated from the horrors of the mortal world and its accompanying fear of death.]

Indeed, this fourth Paad (step or aspect) of the Pranav, i.e. the Naad, is the fourth Paad of the divine Sam Mantra (i.e. of the Anushtup Chanda in which the Mantra of Lord Nrisingh is composed, and which is the subject matter of the Cantos 1 and 2) (2).

“Canto 2, verse no. 5 = The OM is an acronym for the entire universe or creation. Therefore, it is proper that each letter or syllable of the Anushtup Mantra should be prefixed and suffixed with the divine monosyllable OM when it is invoked and vested on the body. Those who are well-versed with this procedure assert that it is the proper way of doing Anga Nyas or vesting the body with the mystical powers and strength of any Mantra (5).

“Canto 4, verse no. 3 = OM is imperishable and eternal. The entire visible world is an exhibition of the majesty, greatness, grandeur, stupendous powers and dynamism of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm. Each phase and aspect of creation, such as the past, the present and the future are dependent upon and controlled by OM. What lies beyond these three phases of creation and time are also deemed within the purview of OM. The entire creation, visible or invisible, is a revelation of Brahm and completely soaked or infused in or pervaded by Brahm. [That is, everything in this world is regulated by the Supreme Being. The word OM represents this Supreme Being like the words ‘His/Her Majesty’ used in modern language to denote the sovereign of country. All the limbs of the government are called ‘on his/her majesty’s service’. Likewise, the running of the entire creation is done on the behalf of the supreme Lord represented by OM. This word is like the Lord’s royal seal and insignia.]

Lord Nrisingh is none but this Brahm personified. Lord Nrisingh has symbolic four Paads, or has four aspects, facets or limbs (which refer to the four states of consciousness, viz. the Jagrat or waking, the Swapna or dreaming, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, and the Turiya or the post-Sushupta state) (3).”

Atharva Veda's *Mundak Upanishad*, Canto 2, section 2, verse no. 4, 6 tells us how the divine Mantra OM helps a spiritual aspirant to attain Brahm, the Supreme Being. During this discussion it uses the metaphor of a bow and an arrow:

“Verse no. 4 = Pranav (the Mantra OM representing Brahm) is the bow, the Atma is the arrow, and Brahm is regarded as the target. [The main aim of all spiritual endeavours is to obtain the knowledge of the Absolute Truth known as Brahm. Since the Atma is the pure conscious ‘self’ of the aspirant, it is the one that aims to become Brahm realised—or realise Brahm, attain Brahm, or reach Brahm. In other words, the Atma is able to understand the Absolute Truth that is taught by the Upanishads. The vehicle for this is the Mantra OM because this Mantra relates directly to Brahm, and therefore is clearly the best medium by which Brahm can be accessed. Just like a man responds when he is called by his personal name, Brahm would respond more quickly and easily when called by this Mantra of OM. This Mantra is used as a medium during meditation and contemplation by the spiritual aspirant; it is used in Japa or constant repetition in order to enable the mind to remain focused on its target of Brahm realisation. Hence, the bow is both the teachings of the Upanishads as mentioned in verse no. 3 as well as the OM as said in this verse no. 4.]

A man who has conquered lethargy and indolence, a man who is alert, vigilant and agile, and a man who is attentive and focused—only such a man can ever hope to pierce the target with the arrow. [That is, these virtues are necessary if one wishes to reach one’s aim in this world, and in the present context, to have Brahm-realisation.]

One should concentrate upon the arrow (the Atma) and be focused on the target (Brahm) in order to pierce (reach) it (i.e. become Brahm-realised). [Inculcating the grand virtues enumerated above is simply like the bow that is properly strung as these virtues can aid an aspirant to reach his sought-after spiritual target. But it is the aspirant himself who must reach the target and enjoy its rewards. Since the Atma or the pure conscious ‘self’ is the true identity of all living beings, it is said here that the Atma is the ‘arrow’ because it is the Atma that attains Brahm and becomes one with Brahm; it is the Atma that becomes ‘Brahm-realised’ when it is said that the creature has become ‘Brahm-realised’. After all, the gross body of the creature is not his ‘true self’, so when it is said that the creature has realised his goal of attaining Brahm, it is actually his Atma that does so.] (4).

[Note—The Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 38-39 uses the metaphor of the bow and the arrow to describe how the Atma of the creature can reach Brahm.]

“Verse no. 6 = Just like the spokes of the wheel of a chariot are fixed to its central hub, and the various Naadis (veins, arteries, capillaries and nerves) are centered around the heart, in the same way the supreme Brahm (i.e. the cosmic Consciousness) that has manifested in numerous ways finds its abode in the heart of the creature (as his Atma, the pure conscious soul which is the truthful ‘self’ of all the living beings) in this world.

That supreme transcendental Brahm should be remembered, worshipped, honoured, meditated and contemplated upon through the medium of the divine and eclectic Mantra exclusively dedicated to it, and this Mantra is OM.

It is absolutely imperative to do so if one wishes to go across the darkness of ignorance (regarding the spiritual truth) in this world (6).”

OM and NAAD:

The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 6

The relationship of “Bindu” (a ‘dot’ or a ‘drop’), “Naad” (the cosmic ‘sound’) and “OM” (the ‘word’ representing Supreme Consciousness)

The concept of Bindu (a ‘dot’ or a ‘drop’) and Naad (the cosmic ‘sound’) have a close association with the concept of OM (the ethereal word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm) and its iconographic depiction as a symbol in the form of the sixth alphabet of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the long vowel sound ‘Ooo’ as in ‘boot or root’, with a Chandra Bindu or a crescent-shaped bowl with a dot hanging in its focal point-- ॐ

This OM is a representative of the supreme transcendental divine entity known as Brahm which predates this existence and lasts even after this world is concluded. In fact, this creation would fall back to merge into this Brahm and re-emerge from it at the time of a new beginning much like waves in an ocean rising and falling into the water again and again. This Brahm is in a neutral, a-dynamic and attributeless state in the period before the process of creation began. Then when the time came for the creation to come forth, energy and necessary strength and relevant power were needed. This is called ‘Shakti’ aspect of Brahm which was inherent to Brahm but in a latent form. The ‘point’ whereby this Brahm revealed his Shakti is called a ‘Bindu’. It is also like a ‘drop’ of the cosmic sperm emerging from the cosmic Purush, the invisible Father of creation, which contain all the necessary energy, strength, vigour and vitality needed to initiate the process of creation. Hence, Bindu is Brahm’s ‘Shakti’ aspect; it represents the ‘dynamic principle of Brahm’. In Tantra literature, Brahm is treated as Shiva, and his energy is called a Shakti represented by the Bindu. Since OM is a symbol for Brahm, this Shakti was put on top of this symbol in iconography to depict this fact in visual term.

Now came the revelation of this Shakti—and that was done in the form of Naad, the ‘cosmic sound’. Since only the invisible ether was present in the beginning, this Shakti caused a ripple in it which spread in the form of waves. Waves have kinetic energy and this set in ‘motion’ the process of creation. Modern science has shown that the origin of this universe was in a Big Bang, and this means that there was a ‘single point’ where this ‘explosive bang’ occurred—a clear reference to the concept of a ‘Bindu’ (point) and its accompanying ‘Naad’ (sound). It was from this Bindu that the

cosmic debris spread out by the force of this explosion to distant corners of the available space to act as nuclei for the umpteen numbers of planets and star systems that would eventually evolve to form the universe as we know of it today.

Since Bindu was the energy of Brahm that was not visible, it is therefore the un-manifest dynamic force of Brahm and very closely associated with the latter; it is a part of Brahm. The Naad is a revealed form of this Shakti as it is the cosmic sound which can be actually heard. Since Naad had its origin in Brahm and is a manifested form of the stupendous energy contained in an un-manifested form in the Bindu, it is constantly associated with them much like the electromagnetic waves (Naad) of a radio broadcasting station, the speaker (Brahm, the consciousness) who broadcasts the news and the transmitter tower (the Bindu) are inseparable from one another.

The concept of 'Bindu' and 'Naad' can be understood in another plane also. The cosmic process of creation needed the injection of a cosmic sperm to initiate the process of the creation of the cosmic embryo. This sperm would come from the cosmic Father, i.e. Brahm. Brahm in the context of metaphysical interpretation of creation would be the 'causal body of the cosmos' because it is the 'cause' of it all. The 'drop' of sperm ejaculated by this Father (Brahm) had the stupendous creative power and energy that provided the necessary spark. The word 'Naad', in addition to its conventional meaning of 'sound', also means a big open concave 'bowl or dish or crucible' for storing liquid, which in the context of creation meant the cosmic womb of Nature. So, when the cosmic Father (Brahm) dropped one 'drop' of his sperm (Bindu) into the crucible (Naad), the cosmic conception was affected and the process was initiated. From this conception there emerged the Hiranyagarbha, the yellow egg of the cosmos, which in terms of Vedanta would be the macrocosmic 'subtle body' of creation. When this cosmic egg matured, the macrocosmic gross body emerged in the form of the Viraat Purush.

The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti.

Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the 'fire element'. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the 'wind element'.

For the purpose of Yoga practice, the Bindu is depicted as the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, i.e. the sixth Sanskrit alphabet 'Ooo', symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard. The location of this Bindu in the body is the center of the two eyebrows where a practitioner of Yoga is supposed to focus his attention during meditation.

The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source of sound energy called Bindu that has Brahm as its principal base.

From the perspective of the meaning of Naad as 'sound' we can have the following interpretation—all sounds have a 'point' of origin, the Bindu of origin. From this point source the sound waves spread out in waves in the ether present in space at the macro level of creation, and in the air in the immediate surrounding space at the micro level of creation. It can be compared to ripples arising on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown on it. 'Energy' waves are created from the 'point' of impact and spread out in concentric layers just like the waves of sound travel in ether. This example would prove why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot) by the ancient sage who had first visualised it.

The Bindu means a 'point source', and Naad refers to the 'un-manifest energy in the form of sound' that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point source to all the directions of creation.

This Bindu or dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad or sound originated when the process of creation first started in what the modern science recognizes as the 'Big Bang'. This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos. The human skull is also slightly concave from the inner side, and the brain is located just below it. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or 'dot' generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra.

It is just like fine tuning the antenna of the modern satellite discs used in television reception. The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This citation is used to give a physical and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad.

This is also why this condition is compared to the 'cosmic union' of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm's ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic vibration which in turn set in motion the process of creation. According to Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti is called Prakriti in the context of Brahm who is called Purush here.

In Tantra worship, Bindu is regarded as Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Shiva, and the Peeth is the seat of this Shakti. There is another way at looking at these two words—Bindu represents the cosmic sperm which represents the dynamic energy, potentials and powers of Shiva, and the Peeth would then be the seat of this Shiva energy, i.e. the base of the Shakti.

Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a form of energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apan wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally

vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound in a school physics laboratory.

This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. [Refer *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 3.]

The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the dynamic forces or Shakti of Brahm, the energy present in this Naad is that dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body but the eye function only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight to see. In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterised by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that ‘sound characterizes this world as living as opposite to being dead’ is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in the *Yogshiksha Upanishad*, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti is located in the Mooladhar Chakra. [Refer *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3.]

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 11 describe how the Bindu and Naad are inter-related and can be compared to the relationship between the moon and the sun, as well as between the fire and wind. To quote—“The Bindu and Naad¹ are like the Moon and the Sun², or like the Agni (fire) and the Vayu (wind)³ respectively (11).

[Note—¹The Bindu means a ‘point source’, and Naad refers to the ‘un-manifest energy in the form of sound’ that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point source to all the directions of creation.

²The Moon is a passive source of light because it simply reflects the light of the Sun falling on it, and hence the active source of light is the Sun. Had there been no Sun, the Moon would not show its light. In the context of Brahm and creation this analogy applies most aptly. The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti which resembles the grand Sun in the sky—brilliant, splendorous, potent and fiery in its form, whilst the principal itself is passive and reflected in its own glory like the Moon shining in the glory of the Sun.

³The same analogy applies to the fire and wind elements in this context. Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the ‘fire element’. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the ‘wind element’.]”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 136-139 describes how the three letters of OM act as the hidden thread that holds together the metaphoric garland of creation. Let us see what it has to say—

“Verse nos. 136-139 = Everything in existence is strung together or held together by these three letters (of OM representing the supreme Brahm). They act like the common thread running through the beads of a rosary or the flowers of a garland holding the independent units together and giving the creation its formal meaning and shape. [This is because the creation has so astounding variation that no two units of it are similar. There must be something to hold such a vast array of diversities together and prevent the entire edifice from disintegrating and scattering around. The bonding factor and the only one common denominator in such a diverse world is the presence of Brahm. And the word OM consisting of the three letters A, U and M is like the symbolic thread that keeps the garland made of a large variety of flowers in place and prevents the flowers from scattering.]

The entity implied and referred to by these three letters is the eternal and imperishable Truth of creation that is Absolute and is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is the supreme stature that the spiritual aspirant aims for and endeavours to reach, it is a most exalted state of being that which is truthful and eternal, and it is called the ‘Param Pada’, i.e. the supreme spiritual attainment or achievement. [This supreme spiritual stature is realisation of the truth about the ‘self’ as a personification of the pure and truthful ‘consciousness’, as an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment, as well as the fact that it is the same as the cosmic ‘Self’ or the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.]

This eternal ‘absolute truth’ (known as Brahm) pervades throughout the creation in a universal and uniform manner. It submerges, drenches and soaks the entire creation; it wafts and warps through it most subtly, imperceptibly and unseen just like the presence of fragrance in a flower, butter and fat in milk, oil in the sesame seed, and gold in its ore.

It is said that a symbolic lotus flower exists in the subtle heart of the creature. The head of this flower faces downwards but its stem is erect. In the center of it is the spot where the creature’s Mana¹ is located. [Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33.]

During meditation on the supreme Truth called Brahm represented by the word OM, when the breath is exhaled, i.e. when Rechak is done, the sound produced is equivalent to the first letter ‘A’ of the triad of three imperishable letters representing that imperishable Truth. That is, the letter ‘A’ of the three-letter word OM is being said. In the context of the lotus-like heart and the Mana inherently present in it as its integral part, this letter ‘A’ represents the vital forces of life present inside the body of a man as well as his Mana representing his subtle heart along with its inherent emotions, sentiments and desires. They are manifested when the man makes the most primitive form of sound in the throat, the sound equivalent of the letter ‘A’ which is the first letter of the divine and ethereal sound OM².

The subtle lotus present in the heart is literally pierced through or ruptured by the second letter ‘U’ of the ethereal divine word OM³.

Finally when the exhalation is complete, the mouth is closed, and the continuous humming sound heard is equivalent to the third letter ‘M’ of the word OM. The cosmic Naad is heard in this stage because its sound is very much alike this sound of OM with a closed mouth. [It is a resonating, reverberating and grave sound of high density that

vibrates through the brain and heart of the practitioner. Nothing else is heard against the background of this sound which drenches the ascetic like the sound emanating from the ocean at high tide which comes roaring in and sweeps the man standing on its coast in one sweeping wave.]

The Ardha Maatraa or the half syllable (which symbolises the subsiding of these sounds and also the link between any two of them) is pure and uncorrupt like crystal⁴. It has no particular form and sound specific to it. At the stage when it is heard, the ascetic is deemed to have reached a state of bliss and ecstasy that no corruptions and worldly faults anymore can taint him. It literally destroys his sins and their evil consequences (136-139).

[Note—¹This Mana is the emotional and sentimental aspects that control the functioning of the subtle aspects of the heart. It determines as to which things the heart would get attracted to and be infatuated with, and which it would treat with a sense of neutrality and even disdain. The Mana is usually regarded to be the subtle aspect of the mind also that controls such functions paying attention and remembering something. But we will observe here that the heart plays an all-important role, because unless the heart is interested in anything and gets involved in it, the mind alone would not be able to fix its attention on that subject for any length of time. A coordinated effort of the subtle mind and subtle heart are collectively called the Mana.

²When a man becomes emotionally aroused, or when his heart wants something or agrees with something, the sound that expresses it is equivalent to the sound of ‘A’ made in the throat, indicating the emotions of ‘aye’ or ‘yeah’ or ‘yes’ or ‘oh’.

³This can be visualised in the example of the kettle with a spout. When the water inside is heated, the steam escapes out through the spout, making a subtle hissing sound. In the present case of Yoga, the heated vital airs rise up the body from its lower half and enter the heart through the stem of this lotus enroute to the head. Since the lotus is bent at its neck and facing downwards, thereby blocking the passage of the wind, it punctures a hole through it and moves upwards. It makes a hissing sound while escaping through it, which is compared with the second letter ‘U’ of the word OM.

⁴It must be noted here that the atoms of quartz crystals are known to vibrate and emit very subtle electrical impulses which are harnessed in quartz watches and other electronic instruments. The same thing probably happens here. The subtle electric energy present inside the heart not only keeps it beating normally while the ascetic meditates but also enhances the vibrations produced by saying OM silently. The resonance produced by these two sounds, i.e. the beating of the heart and the silent repetition of the Mantra OM, overlap each other and their frequencies are greatly enhanced, thereby multiplying their effect. As a result what was previously a subtle sound gradually becomes a roar like a ferocious ocean or the rumbling of a train passing over a bridge at night. This the ‘Naad’ heard by the ascetic.

The concept of ‘Ardha Maatraa, has been elaborated upon in Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 9, and Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 36, both of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]”

Yoga Upanishads assert that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad when his Kundalini is activated and the vital winds forces of life present inside the body are controlled. At the same time as experiencing the dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, called the Bindu, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being.

This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Saman, Vyan and Udan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. The way Naad is experienced by the ascetic has been narrated in Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33-36, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/2, Hanso-panishad, verse no. 16, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 52.

The word Bindu literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Asanas, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Dhyana Bindu, Amrita Bindu and Amrita Naad Upanishads etc.

In this context, we can refer to the Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 52 which narrates how this Naad is heard and the dripping of Bindu experienced by the practitioner of Yoga when his Kundalini is activated. To quote—"It is from here or due to the activation of the Kundalini's subtle energy that the Bindu develops and the cosmic Naad is enhanced.

The practitioner also hears the subtle sound of breath coming in and going out of the nostrils, the sound that resembles the nasal sounds made by silently hissing the two letters 'Ha' and 'Sa' of the Sanskrit alphabet. The combined effect of continuously hearing these two sounds in a cyclic manner as the practitioner exhales and inhales breath is the formation of the word 'Hans' which means 'a divine Swan'. [In other words, by continuously practicing Yoga, a stage is reached when the spiritual aspirant realises that he has obtained an exalted stature and has been successful in his endeavour of doing Yoga. This achievement is indicated by the fact that his sub-conscious mind hums and constantly reminds him that he is as pure and holy as the Swan—the 'Hans'.]¹

From this arises the Mana (i.e. the desire and inclination of the mind to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy that comes with experiencing the pure conscious 'self' or Atma, in all its glory and magnificence, during meditation) (52).

[Note—¹Traditionally, Swan is regarded as a holy and pure bird. It is said to pick up pearls from amongst an array of gems and jewels, and drink milk while leaving aside

water and other additives that have been added to adulterate the milk. Its high position in the hierarchy of evolution, especially that aspect which relates to wisdom, erudition and skills, is proved by the fact that it is the mount of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, erudition, skills and knowledge. So, when a practitioner of Yoga has reached the stage when he begins to hear Naad and his breath humming silently the word 'Hans' as it comes in and goes out of the body during normal course of routing breathing as well as during the actual time when Yoga is being done, i.e. during the Rechak and Purak phases of Pranayam respectively, he would understand that he is successful in his endeavour.]"

Rig Veda's *Naad Bindu Upanishad* describes the concept of Naad elaborately in its verse nos. 32-52 as follows:

"Verse no. 32 = By slow practice, this 'Naad' envelops all other external sounds (i.e. the 'Naad' dominates the entire audible spectrum and the seeker/ascetic does not hear anything else except the 'Naad'). The Yogi should move gradually from the sound emanating from or originating with the first syllable or vowel sound A (ॐ) to the 2nd syllable or vowel sound O (ॐ) and finally to the 3rd syllable or letter M (ॐ) of the cosmic word to hear the entire cosmic band of sounds compositely called the word OM (A+U/O+M = OM, or better still 'Aum'). This gives the Yogi immense bliss and ecstasy. He feels exhilarated and blissful. (32)

[Note :- 'Naad' covers the entire gamut of audible as well as inaudible frequencies of sound waves—the low, the medium, the high and the ultra high frequencies of sound. For a Yogi, in the beginning, the 'Naad' appears to be simply a distant roar or rumble. Gradually this metamorphoses into music—because music is also a form of sound and its constituent notes and sounds are sonic waves of different frequencies and magnitudes. The different amplitudes and frequencies of 'Naad' create a sensation which tickles the sensory nerves of the brain and makes the person feel exhilarated, blissful, calm and tranquil even as music helps in calming ruffled nerves.]

"Verse no. 33 = In the beginning of the practice of concentrating on the cosmic sound called 'Naad' which is synonymous with 'Pranav', the Yogi seeker hears the cosmic sound in various forms and hues (i.e. having different amplitudes, frequencies, magnitudes, notes, decibels and pitches). Gradually with the progress in concentration of the seeker, the finer tunes, notes and subtle differences of various frequencies of those notes and their pitches are discernible. (33)

[Note :- In the beginning, it is simply a mixed-up cacophony of sound, a sort of distant rumbling or roar. But with gradual practice, the seeker is able to hear various sounds of different magnitudes and frequencies, having different pitches and amplitudes, some of high and some of low decibel. The example of musical instruments can be taken here—for an uninitiated man, a combination of various musical instruments means only a loud, ear-

shattering, cacophonous sound. But for the expert and discerning ears of a musician, the drums, the tumbrels, the clarionat, the guitar, the cymbals, the tom-tom, the piano, the flute, the violin, the harp, the harmonium, the mouth organ, the saxophone, the sitar et.al acquire distinctiveness of sound inspite of the ear-splitting cacophony they produce for a layman. This sound is music for a musician's ears. For him, inspite of the ruckus and din created by them all playing together— which might create a headache for an ordinary man—the various sounds emanating from each of these musical instrument have a definitive meaning and they are clearly audible and discernible for his ears. They charm him instead of irritating him. In fact, a musician might even point out an error in the beat or metre of a particular note made by a specific instrument amid the cacophonous jumble of sounds.

This is what is meant by saying that the Yogi seeker is able to discern the subtle differences in the various components of the cosmic sound called 'Pranav' or 'Naad'. Further, even as a true lover of music gets enthralled by its finer beauty and captivating charm, the Yogi too gets completely absorbed in the cosmic 'Naad'; he literally drowns himself in the ocean of sound. Again, even as music has a therapeutic value, this cosmic 'Naad' too has a healing value for the tormented creature.]

“Verse nos. 34-35 = This cosmic Naad/sound appears to be, in the beginning (“Aadi”; the ‘initial stage’), like the sound created by an ocean, a cloud (i.e. rumblings), a kettledrum and a waterfall. In the 2nd stage (“the middle stage”) of meditation and concentration upon this sound, it changes (transforms or metamorphoses) to the one like that coming from a tumbrel, tabor, tambourine, a bell and a drum. (34)

In the last stage (“Anta”, the final stage), it appears to be the tinkling and chiming sound made by small bells attached to an anklet, the haunting, sonorous, soothing and flowing high pitched sound of a flute, the tinkling, jingling and ringing sound of an Indian lute, and the humming or buzzing of a black bee. In this way, subtlest and minutest differences having various fine musical hues of ‘Naad’ can be heard. All the genres of sound can be heard if the attention is properly focused on the ‘Naad’. It is more like a cosmic orchestra being played in the heavens. (35)

“Verse no. 36 = With persistence and practice, the Yogi seeker should attempt to separate finer genres, hues and shades of sounds from the general broad band or spectrum of sounds of a particular category or genre he hears. [For example, he should focus on the sound of, say, a drum or a waterfall at a time, and try to separate its various hues, notes, amplitudes and pitches from the rest of the sounds compositely forming the cosmic sound ‘Naad’. He should try to differentiate between the various notes and frequencies of this sound— deep and grave to light and soft, from a somber tone to a shrill pitch, from the lowest to the highest scale of sound.]

This will enable him to hear the subtlest of sounds, the finest strands of sounds that compositely constitute ‘Pranav’ or ‘Naad’. (36)

[Note :- The cosmic 'Naad' is like music played by Brahm. This music is an extension of the supreme consciousness and it is a manifestation of that divine conscious factor. Since sound is the subtlest of the 5 basic elements of creation and is the nearest to divinity, the cosmic music consisting of the 'Naad' is the nearest analogue to Brahm. By being able to hear that 'Naad' in one's own ears and by being able to realise that the 'Naad' is originating as a subtle vibration from his own heart and getting enhanced by the compatible electromagnetic waves generated by his own brain, the Yogi is able to establish a direct link with himself and the supreme Brahm. By a natural corollary, he is able to establish oneness of his own consciousness with the cosmic consciousness because the science of music, or the science which is recognised and defined as music, transcends limitations imposed by the gross body, the physical world and its language. This 'Naad' or the divine music played by the cosmic consciousness is therefore an expression of the Reality that exists beyond doubt but is so subtle that it requires a finely tuned mind to catch its frequencies and give meaning to it.

The various finer tunes and notes of varying hues that are heard by the Yogi during meditation only go to prove that he is no more a layman or an ordinary student of spiritualism, but an erudite, adroit and learned student of advanced metaphysics. He has acquired that mystical knowledge and acumen by which an expert musician is able to discern and distinguish between the various forms of sound emanating from different musical instruments.]

“Verse no. 37 = Those who meditate upon the cosmic sound called 'Naad' should either focus their attention on the great, composite sound, or else on its finer hues and constituent subtler sounds. But he should not allow his mind to wander anywhere else. (37)

“Verse no. 38 = Wherever the seeker/aspirant can easily fix his mind—whether it be the general, all pervading rumbling cosmic sound of 'Pranav', or its finer strands and subtler tunes, he should fix it there. It is an aid for the gradual diversion of the mind from being wayward, a vagrant and straggler, jumping from one place to another, and instead helping it to fix itself. It helps to bring the mind together, concentrate it, focus it and hook it to 'Pranav'. In due course of time, this 'Pranav' engulfs the seeker's whole audible spectrum, or his part of the brain dealing with the perception of sound. He gets swamped with the noise of 'Pranav'. The seeker is submerged and drowned in the reverberations and vibrations emanating from 'Pranav'. The sound of 'Pranav' supersedes all other sounds as far as the mind of the seeker is concerned. He hears nothing else except it. He might hear the sounds of the world, but those will be heard in the background of the rumbling sound caused by 'Pranav'. (38)

[Note :- The words 'OM', 'Pranav' and 'Naad' are almost universally used in a synonymous way.]

“Verse no. 39 = The seeker’s/aspirant’s mind forgets about all external stimuli and perceptions. It becomes completely engrossed and submerged in the ‘Naad’ so much so that it becomes one with it as water becomes one with milk [That is, the mind and the ‘Naad’ become inseparable even as milk and water are inseparable from one another.] The mind, having thus submerged itself in the ‘Naad’, dissolves itself and merges at once with the infinite space from where this ‘Naad’ comes from, and where it is spread, so as to fill the whole space of the sky. [That is, the mind expands and fills the entire space of the cosmos as a constituent part of the ‘Naad’] (39)

[Note :- ‘Naad’ is always heard in the background of silence. The deep recesses of space are full of void or nothingness. It is against this blank void that the cosmic sound or ‘Pranav’ is heard. When the Yogi shuts off worldly noises, which are like unwarranted interferences in the reception of divine signals emanating from Brahm, by the various methods of Yoga and concentration, he fine-tunes his receptory senses to hear the ‘Naad’. With increase in concentration and enhancement in expertise, what was originally a jumbled uproar or a motley collection of meaningless sounds, transform themselves into a divine orchestra playing the divine music to some preset tunes and notes.

‘The formless is attributed as well as un-attributed. He has gone into deep absorption in the cosmic void. He has made the creation himself; he meditates upon it himself. He is absorbed in the cosmic void where the un-struck cosmic music plays. This miraculous wonder is beyond expression’ (Adi Guru Granth Sahib, Gauri Sukhmani). ‘The melting voice through mazes running/untwisting all the chains that tie/the hidden soul of harmony’— John Milton

“Verse no. 40 = A self-controlled or self-restrained seeker/aspirant should abstain from all the sense gratifying perceptions and sensual objects of the external world. On the contrary, he should make sincere and diligent effort to consciously and willingly focus his attention on the hearing of this cosmic ‘Naad’, and to try to spend his time completely engrossed and submerged in it. He should be completely infused and imbued with it. (40)

“Verse no. 41 = The seeker/aspirant should consciously forsake all worries, divert his mind away from all worldly activities and interactions, and instead concentrate it upon the ‘Naad’—think of it, contemplate upon it, hear it and meditate upon it because by doing so he can easily submerge his mind, drench it in the ‘Naad’ and finally dissolve it in the latter. (41)

“Verse no. 42 = Even as a bee does not pay any attention to and get distracted by the fragrance/scent of the flower while drinking its nectar, the mind which is totally engrossed in hearing the cosmic ‘Naad’ has no inclination or time to pay heed to any of the sensory perceptions pertaining to gratification of

the sense organs or the various attractions and allurements proffered by the objects of this materialistic but artificial and mundane world so as to get distracted from hearing the 'Naad'. (42)

"Verse no. 43 = The mind-like serpent becomes so enchanted and captivated by the sound of the 'Naad' that it abandons its fickleness and restlessness, and instead, it becomes stable and calm. (43)

"Verse no. 44 = As a result, the mind forgets about the external world and its misleading charms, becomes stable and focused, and it stops wandering recklessly amongst the objects of the world. This mind is like an intoxicated wild elephant in the forest represented by the material objects of this world. [The world is compared to the forest, the different objects of the world which entice and lure the creature are compared to the trees of the forest, while the elephant is the creature himself] (44)

"Verse no. 45 = To control this rogue elephant-like mind, the 'Naad' acts as a goad, and it is the only implement to control the mind's recklessness. The 'Naad' acts like a net to trap and tie this mind-like deer. (45)

"Verse no. 46 = The 'Naad' acts like dyke or a dam to stop the swift waves of the mind which symbolise its swift and ever-changing fickle nature. [This is because the concentration of mind on a specific object, in this case the 'Naad', helps to tame it, prevent it from wobbling, scattering and jumping from subject to subject, and instead staying fixed to a peg. This is also what is intended by Yoga—fixing of the mind, amongst other things.] This 'Naad'—which is associated with the supreme Brahm—is equally self-illuminated and scintillating, equally radiant and glorious. (46)

"Verse no. 47 = The mind annihilates itself (or merge its self) in that fount of light— it loses its separate identity and becomes indistinguishable from the 'Naad'. It is there that the supreme abode of the most exalted Lord Vishnu is located.

The firm identification of the mind with the vastness and fathomlessness of the sky lasts as long as the words (of the divine word OM) are heard and pronounced by the seeker/aspirant (i.e. as long as the vibration keeps resonating in his mind-intellect complex). (47)

"Verse no. 48 = When there is no word, there is the all-pervading conspicuous silence which brings the mind in direct union with and makes it experience the transcendental supreme essence called the Brahm, which is the supreme Soul or supreme Lord of the creation called 'Parmatma'. The mind exists only till the time the cosmic sound of the 'Naad' lasts; as soon as the latter ceases, the mind too ceases to exist or show signs of existence because it had become so engrossed in the hearing of the resonance of the 'Naad' that it had

become numb and devoid of any independent feelings of its own. It was in a state of blissful stupor, as it were. (48)

“Verse no. 49 = When the different constituent sounds of the ‘Naad’ (i.e., the various syllables and sounds which constitute the cosmic divine word OM as described in verse nos. 6-16 above) merge with each other and collapse back into their point of origin, that particular state is called the ‘soundless supreme state of existence’ marked by absolute silence. Constant contemplation and meditation upon the ‘Naad’ results in gradual elimination or dissipation of all the worldly desires and yearning for gratification of the sense organs; it helps to overcome the urge for seeking pleasure from the material objects of the world. This goes on till, at the ultimate end, they completely vanish and cease to have any relevance. (49)

“Verse no. 40 = After that, both the mind and the vital wind force called ‘Pran’ merge into one another and become one with the supreme, eternal, attributeless, divine, holy, pure and transcendental entity called Brahm. There is no doubt about it. Thousands of sounds and millions of spots or nodes plunge themselves and vanish into that cosmic ‘Naad’ which is also called ‘Pranav’, and it is synonymous with Brahm. (50)

[Note :- A parallel can be drawn between this concept and the merging of millions of individual souls with the one supreme Soul called Brahm— a doctrine which is central to the Upanishadic teachings. Since ‘Pranav’ or the cosmic sound represented by the word OM is regarded as first manifestation of Brahm, the rest is easy to understand. All dimension of sound have their origin in that ‘Naad’, and the ‘Naad’ itself has its origin in silence which is the supreme, cosmic consciousness. The ‘Naad’ rises and collapses into the ocean of the cosmic void/silence just like huge waves rise and fall back into the water of the ocean.]

“Verse no. 50 = When this state is reached, the seeker/aspirant Yogi (ascetic) rises above (i.e. becomes free from) the three states of worldly existence—the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state of consciousness. He is also freed from all the worries and anxieties which are so characteristic of this world. (51)

“Verse no. 51 = The Yogi apparently lives like a dead person. Verily, that Yogi has achieved the state of ‘Mukti’ (liberation from the bondage that tie the soul to this illusionary and mundane world; deliverance, emancipation and salvation). In such a state (when he has witnessed and enjoyed the cosmic ‘Naad’), the Yogi never hears (or pays attention to) the worldly noises or sounds produced by either the conch or the kettledrums.

[This is because the cosmic ‘Naad’ itself consist of so many sounds of numerous musical instruments playing together as described in verse nos. 33-

36 that he is so overwhelmed by them and his sense of perception pertaining to the worldly sounds is completely overshadowed by those sounds emanating from the 'Naad', and he literally becomes deaf to worldly sounds. One can easily understand it by an example—a person who is in deep sleep after a tiring day's work will sleep so soundly that the noises of the household and the surrounding world will not wake him up or disturb his sleep. Another example is a person who has an earphone of a pocket radio plugged to his ears; he can hear the music etc., dance to its tunes, laughs and exults, becomes so ecstatic that he might not even hear the horn of an approaching vehicle. That is why it is said that 'Prayer is when one talks to God; meditation is when one listen to God'] (52)"

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

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